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Studies in South Asian Film & Media

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Studies in South Asian Film & Media is committed to looking at the media and cinemas of the Indian subcontinent in their social, political, economic, historical, and increasingly globalized and diasporic contexts, in relation to class, caste, gender, race, sexuality, and ideology. The journal hopes to build a space for critical media theory and practice, engage scholars, activists, and media practitioners in dialogue, clarify the relationship between culture and politics, and highlight South Asia as a vantage point from where the contemporary integration of the globe may be understood. Analytical and theoretical perspectives that are critical, interdisciplinary, and global, and which combine an awareness of aesthetics with insights from the humanities and social sciences to explain how subjectivities and publics are produced in specific historical contexts, are especially welcome.

Topics covered will include but are not limited to: history, aesthetics, and political economy of South Asian media culture; history of the progressive movement in Indian cinema and media; the crossovers between cinema, media and the other arts; critical studies of the politics of culture as used in various social movements; the new international division of cultural labor; the process and consequences of the shift from state-owned media to the neo-liberal model; globalization; cinema as social history; public spaces and theatrical exhibition; representation in contemporary Indian writing and media on the turn towards neo-liberalism; the theory and practice of Third Cinema in the Indian context, regional/vernacular cinema; and gender and subalterneity.

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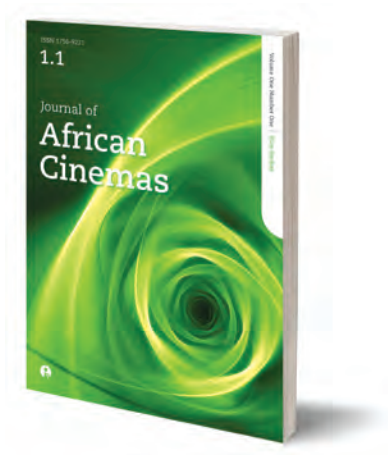

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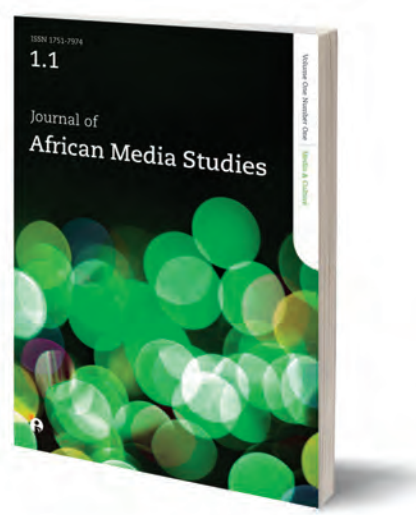

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Editorial

Alka Kurian, Jyotsna Kapur and Aarti Wani

When putting out a new journal one has to ask the question, why another journal? As we bring out the very first issue of *Studies in South Asian film and Media* we would like to offer our readers the discussion and reasoning that underlay our decision to launch this journal. Our overriding concern in this entire process was to not produce just another niche journal and so add to a small corner of academic investigation. Rather, the ambition of this journal is to clarify the contemporary moment, the capitalist integration of the world and its accompanying politics and culture, by looking at South Asian media culture in its social, political, economic, historical, and increasingly globalized and diasporic contexts, in relation to class, caste, gender, race, sexuality, and ideology.

Communication technologies have been widely identified as central to the radicalized integration of the world, to how war and business are conducted, labor and consumers produced, and the overwhelming interconnection that prevails between drastically disparate economic and geographical zones. Moreover, the strategic position of the Indian subcontinent in the U.S.-led war against Iraq and Afghanistan; its emergence in the global economy as a market and source of cheap labor; and the very contested nature of the neoliberal transition in South Asia have made it a critical vantage point from where current worldwide trends might be observed and understood. It is in culture that we see these political and economic changes represented, imagined, acted out, reinforced or resisted. Cinema and other contemporary media offer us a glimpse into the human dimensions of political and economic transformations, into how they are experienced and imagined, and it is our hope that this journal will serve as a forum where they are outlined and analyzed. We also assume that such an understanding has global implications, which will help clarify the relationship between culture and politics and build a critical media theory and practice more generally and not just in the South Asian context.

We hope to build a critical and interdisciplinary enquiry into media culture, one which combines an awareness of aesthetics and texts with insights from the humanities and social sciences to explain why and how life is lived and experienced in particular historical contexts. In other words, we look for analyses that consider media as cultural and historical artifacts that can help construct a social history of their times. We will also bring out special issues devoted to particular questions or issues and very much welcome your suggestions for those.

Producing this journal has been very much a collaborative experience made possible by the Internet. The editors, based in three different continents, first met online and have yet to meet in person. There were

four of us to begin with: Aarti Wani, Alka Kurian, Jyotsna Kapur, and Rajinder Dudrah who together fleshed out an initial sketch of the direction the journal would take. Regrettably, Rajinder had to leave because of other commitments.

In her article 'Between the Godfather and the Mafia: Situating Right-Wing Interventions in the Bombay Film Industry (1992–2002)', Nandana Bose argues that the granting of the 'industry' status to Bombay cinema did little in assuaging its perennial anxiety over, among others, dubious financing of films, piracy, and copyright violations. In Bose's views, the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government's decision to offer this status made way for an uncomfortable nexus between the right-wing state and powerful film personalities, a further fortification of the underworld film financing, tax evasions, the use of cinema as a tool for right-wing propaganda, and an undermining of the democratic award-conferring processes for films and actors. Yet another instance of a material and ideological state intervention in the country's largest entertainment industry, according to Bose, led to its corporatisation that reinvented it as a 'global player for diasporic consumption and investment'. Shahnaz Khan's article 'Nationalism and Hindi Cinema: Narrative Strategies in *Fanaa*', follows the lead offered by Bose's work through an exploration of one of the most successful films of the 2000s, *Fanaa*. Khan offers her analysis by problemetising the intersecting issues of religious minorities, nationalism, citizenship, and gender as they are represented and reinforced by a certain type of contemporary Bombay cinema. She constructs her argument by focusing on the film's narrative strategies to explore the nature of gendered, classed, and nationalist politics that the film aims at promoting and the kind of imagined community – national or diasporic – that it addresses. Khan's discussions tie into the larger questions of the definition and construction of the Muslim identity that is shaped by the forces of Hindutva which operate by silencing or offering alternative sectarian and gendered subjectivities. The consequences of the powerful networks of dominant Hindu ideologies at every level of film production and distribution networks, nationally and across borders, promote and reinforce dominant ideas of nationhood and citizenship, argues Khan.

In her 'Nautanki and Hindi Cinema: Changing Representations', through a comparison of the 1966 film *Teesri Kasam* with the 2003 film Main *Madhuri Dixit Banna Chahti* Hoon, Nandi Bhatia looks at the shifting representations of Nautanki in Hindi cinema to examine the manner in which it brings together the overlapping themes of traditional art, gender, nationalism, and modernity. As a form of folk art, while Nautanki situates its women artists within hegemonic structures of class, patriarchy, and power that are played out both within public and private domains, it nevertheless enables the construction of their gendered agency. While the article focuses on the continuity of aspects of the Nautanki aesthetic within Bombay cinema, it also undertakes to investigate how its cinematic appropriation heralded a simultaneous transformation of this form of theatre as well as the subject position of its female actors within the nation's cultural life. On the one hand *Teesri Kasam* attempts to stem the erasure of India's traditional art

forms, on the other hand, the turn of the century *Main Madhuri Dixit …* foregrounds the modern form of cinema as a site that reinforces women's subject position by offering them wider cross-border acceptability.

In his 'Melbourne, Indian Popular Cinema and the Marketing of "An Enviable Cosmopolitan Lifestyle"', Andrew Hassam highlights the nexus between globalization, consumerism, and Indian popular cinema. He argues that, with an eye on India's financial market, potential for tourism, and migration of its highly-skilled citizens, Melbourne vies with other Metropolitan cities across the contemporary globalized world in soliciting Indian popular cinema. The latter, in turn, makes record profit through offering glamorized representations of western icons – trams, shopping malls, hotels – as embodying a desired cosmopolitan lifestyle of this global city. Multinational corporate sector-led globalised consumerism is not the only context within which the Indian film industry is enlisted. John Lent's insightful work on 'Animation in South Asia' explores the forces that have compelled the Indian visual entertainment industry to wake up to the developments taking place in its immediate neighborhood. Regional dominance of the animation industry in East Asia, the lack of technological, personnel, and financial infrastructure, general apathy towards this art form usually perceived as a source of infantile entertainment, and the domination of the live-action Indian film industry, had together contributed to restricting its growth in South Asia. While the state of affairs in most of the region has not much altered, animation industry has undergone tremendous transformation in India since mid-1990s with an estimated turnover of around US$ one billion generating keen interest from Bollywood and Hollywood. In his discerning study of the animation from 1915 to the present, John Lent links this growth to globalization, outsourcing of Western media texts in India, proliferation of Indian television channels needing a variety of programming, and the country's leadership in computer technology.

Two articles in this collection present competing and yet curiously similar narratives of identity construction for Indian women. Monika Mehta's 'A Certification Anomaly: The Self-Sacrificial Female Body in Bombay Cinema', offers a meticulous study of the long-drawn battle undertaken by R. K. Nayyar, producer of the film *Pati Parmeshwar*, with the Central Board for Film certification (CBFC) that hesitated over a long period of time to release the film. The debate rested on the film's deployment of a 'ubiquitous Hindi film trope of the self-sacrificial wife' that, in the view of CBFC, promoted retrograde ideas of womanhood and servility. While the Board's decision came as a surprise to Nayyar for what he saw as not too atypical a film, the production of the film coincided with two volatile controversies of the 1980s (Roop Kanwar and Shah Bano) leading to a period of profound national self-introspection, and debate amongst a diversity of communities, feminist organizations, and the state. Mehta's article, in this manner, problematises fictional representations of essentialized Indian femininity marked by servility, passivity, and conservatism. In their 'Looking for Love in All the White Places: A Study of Skin Color Preferences on Indian Matrimonial and Mate-seeking websites', Sonora Jha and Mara Adelman highlight the manner in which contemporary, technology-led mate-seeking processes further entrench bias towards a specific kind of femininity marked by

physical attributes (of lighter skin color), reinforcing multiple levels of gendered discrimination and oppression.

In his 'Caricaturizing Freedom: Islam, Offence, and The Danish Cartoon Controversy', Ashwani K Peetush offers his discomfort with the publication of cartoons caricaturing Islam by Jyllands-Posten. His critique stems from the potential of such publications further reinforcing prejudice and hatred in fragile communities marked by diversity, undermining democracy, muffling the voice of the marginalized, and hindering 'global intercultural dialogue and understanding between nations'. The final paper in this collection charts the complex journey of Bollywood into Tibet where neither does it address itself to an Indian diaspora nor is it targeted by the Bombay producers. In her 'Bollywood, Tibet, and the spatial and temporal dimensions of global modernity', Anna Morcom offers a detailed ethnographic and historical investigation of the 'exotic and erotic' Bollywood's incursion into a 'multicultural' China by situating her argument within the context of modernity (i.e. globalization, tourism), India's historical links with Tibet, China and Nepal, as well as the logic of 'collateral damage'. Both Peetush and Morcom underline the importance of culture in the contemporary integration of the world by global capital. They highlight the idea of cultural rootedness, difference, and alternative modernities as very much in contest with the enlightenment ideas of democracy and human needs.

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Nautanki and Hindi Cinema: Changing Representations[1]

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Abstract

This essay examines the changing representations of Nautanki in Hindi cinema through an analysis of Teesri Kasam *(1966) and* Main Madhuri Dixit Banna Chahti Hoon *(2003), and addresses the role and function of such representations in engaging intersecting questions of theatre, gender, modernity and nationalism. Produced at a distance of more than three decades, the films focus on Nautanki dancer-actresses, give them space to express their voices, and expose the difficulties and power-relations involved in negotiating their public and private lives. Yet the cinematic frames and aesthetics of these films, derived in part from Nautanki, function as technologies that both mark and participate in the shifting ideological perspectives on the place of theatre and its actresses in the cultural life of the nation, and in relation to Bollywood. While* Teesri Kasam *functions as a film that intends to produce for its audience a political consciousness about folk theatre at a time when the post-independence nation sought an autonomous identity through the revival and recuperation of its 'traditional' cultural forms,* Main Madhuri Dixit, *produced in the post-1990s milieu of a globally growing Bollywood industry, suggests that cinema is the appropriate cultural medium for fulfilling the Nautanki actress's desire for greater social success and acknowledgement across national and transnational sites.*

Keywords

Nautanki
Hindi Cinema
theatre actress
Teesri Kasam
Main Madhuri Dixit Banna Chahti Hoon
India

This essay examines the role of Hindi cinema in representing popular theatre, specifically Nautanki, and analyzes the implications of such representations for notions of nationalism, gender, and modernity at different sociopolitical moments. I undertake this examination through analysis of two films: Basu Bhattacharya's *Teesri Kasam* (1966) and Chandan Arora's *Main Madhuri Dixit Banna Chahti Hoon* (2003). Produced at a distance of more than three decades, the films focus on the lives of Nautanki dancer-actresses, give them space to express their voices, and expose the difficulties involved in negotiating their public and private lives. While the former deals with the trials and tribulations of a Nautanki actress, the latter represents the aspirations of a village Nautanki dancer to go to Bombay and become a star like the famous actress Madhuri Dixit, who now lives in the United States and commands an iconic status in Bollywood. In examining the two films, the essay also explores how these very different representations of Nautanki mark the shifting perspectives on the place of popular theatre in the cultural life of the nation, and in relation to Bollywood.

Deepti Priya Mehrotra sees cinema as supplying 'valuable clues' to the lives of Nautanki actresses such as Gulab Bai who began acting in the 1930s

1. I gratefully acknowledge Alka Kurian and the anonymous reader for their very helpful advice. Additionally, I would like to thank Teresa Hubel for listening to my ideas, Anjali-Gera Roy for encouraging me to develop this essay, and Nida Sajid for research assistance.

and died in 1996, and lists *Teesri Kasam* as a film that resonates with her life (Mehrotra 2006: 234). Yet the relationship between cinema and theatre remains contentious. Some critics, playwrights, and directors hold cinema responsible for dwindling theatre audiences and shrinking financial patronage.[2] Others see cinema as enabling the promotion of theatrical forms by foregrounding its importance in the cultural and political spheres. In an essay on the Ramlila of Bhimtal, Lothar Lutze shows how many of the regional theatre forms have 'come to light even in mass media such as the commercial Hindi film' (Lutze 1990: 210). This latter assertion is useful if one considers that *Main Madhuri Dixit Banna Chahti Hoon*, while ostensibly a satire on the world of Bombay cinema and the difficulties it imposes on entry-level aspirants such as its village dancer-protagonist, throws light on the popularity of Nautanki in the village and makes this form available to urban audiences. Another recent example is director Dibakar Bannerjee's film *Khosla ka Ghosla* (2006), which shows the ability of a theatre group to break into the corrupt world of real estate politics in suburban Delhi when all other strategies fail, and restore the seized land to its rightful owner.

The relationship of Hindi cinema to popular theatre is all the more significant when we consider that historically it was theatre that inspired the founding assumptions, techniques, themes, and aesthetics of the latter in its formative years, particularly cinema's melodramatic mode, its scenic splendours, visual sets, imagery and costumes. In the words of Mehrotra, 'Films borrowed plots, styles of song, dance and characterization from Nautanki, Parsi theatre, Tamasha and other popular genres' (Mehrotra 2006: 300) and even the first Hindi film, D.G. Phalke's *Raja Harishchandra* (1913), owed its debt to Nautanki, based as it was on a Nautanki by the same name that had been performed numerous time before cinema became the dominant art form (Mehrotra 2006: 300). As cinema's popularity heightened by the 1950s, it in turn inspired the creation of new Nautankis, examples of which, according to Mehrotra (2006: 300–301) include Yasin Mian's *Jehangir ka Insaf* based on the film *Mughal-e-Azam* and other Nautanki nataks such as *Pukar*, Sholay and *Nagin* that 'were directly inspired by the films bearing the same names' (Mehrotra 2006: 301). Nautankis began to borrow 'dialogues, songs and plots' from cinema and 'actors modeled themselves on well-known heroes, heroines and character artistes' (Mehrotra 2006: 301). In fact, many of the contemporary famous cinema celebrities such as director Ranjit Kapoor, actor Raghuvir Yadav and qawwali singers Shankar and Shambhu come from Nautanki families (Mehrotra 2006: 301).

Because of such connections to theatre, some critics, points out Madhav Prasad, see popular Hindi cinema as the 'site of an authentically folk culture' and view the presence of elements derived from theatre – melodrama, songs, stage layout – 'as evidence of the unbroken continuity of Indian culture and its tenacity in the face of the onset of modernity' (Prasad 2008: 15). My aim in examining the presence of Nautanki in cinema is not to render visible the ways in which the cinematic aesthetic fulfils its melodramatic modes and maintains continuity with local theatrical traditions through the deployment of songs and dances that are integral to popular Hindi cinema. Rather, I argue that *Teesri Kasam* and *Main Madhuri Dixit*'s

2. Sheila Bhatia, an important theatre personality known for her work on Panjabi drama, regretfully says the following in an interview: 'When theatre is fighting a losing battle with cinema and television, when the government has not come up with any cultural norms and the media is out to ruin the interests of the viewers… when increasing expenses prevent adequate rehearsal and staging, when viewers only want to spend money on cheap entertainment rather than on good theatre, when actors want to elevate themselves rather than their acting, and when everything has become so commercial that channels too are being sold, then what plans can one make [for theatre]?' (Kaushal 2000: 141–142, translation mine]

aesthetic apparatuses, derived, as they are, from Nautanki, function as technologies that enable cinema's participation in and perpetuation of the dominant ideologies of their moments of production. *Teesri Kasam* was released at a time of nation-building in post-independence India that encouraged the revival of the nation's traditional cultural practices and forms such as Nautanki. Thus, through the personal narrative of Hiraman and Hira Bai, the film seeks to highlight this form of theatre as a cultural repository to be valued and treasured. *Main Madhuri Dixit* was released in the wake of the post-1990s liberalized economy that provided the Hindi film industry with a greater global image and circulation. Despite its focus on a village Nautanki dancer, it is the lure of Bollywood that becomes a central theme in this film, and unlike *Teesri Kasam*, it reduces Nautanki to a form of local entertainment whose cultural capital can only be realized through the modernization of the form, its dances, as well as the dancer. Hence, while *Teesri Kasam* functions as a film that intends to produce for its audience a political consciousness about folk theatre at a time when the nation sought an identity through the revival of its 'traditional' cultural forms, *Main Madhuri Dixit* insists on the Nautanki dancer's shift to modernity, implied through an emphasis on a perfect body, westernized hair and clothing, urbane speech, and the adoption of Bollywood dance styles that are familiar across transnational sites and contexts.

Since these ideologies are realized through female protagonists, this essay further examines the role of these films in mediating the construction and representation of the Nautanki dancer-actress at these differentiated moments. In so doing, the essay also addresses the following questions: What does the transition from a local theatre actress-dancer to a Bombay film star in *Main Madhuri Dixit,* signal? And how do notions of modernity filter such representation? Such questions are important because unlike critical work on the representation of vamps (Kabir 2001, Kasbekar 2001), female heroines (Vohra 2008), and westernized and Anglo-Indian women in Indian cinema (Gangoli 2005), the representation of the Nautanki actress-dancer has received little attention. Given that Hindi cinema has repeatedly tackled the question of Courtesans, Devadasis and actresses in films such as *Umrao Jaan* (1981, 2006), *Ahista Ahista* (1981), *Pakeezah* (1972) and *Bhumika: The Role* (1977), *Teesri Kasam* and *Main Madhuri Dixit* acquire special relevance. Together, they reveal the different ideological frames within which Hindi cinema operates. While both films highlight the power-struggles that Nautanki actresses have to negotiate, *Main Madhuri Dixit* suggests that cinema is the appropriate cultural medium for fulfilling the Nautanki actress's desire for greater social success and acknowledgement.

Nautanki and its actresses

In order to understand the two films and their significance, it is important to return to Nautanki, examine its place within the cultural life of the nation, and explore the meanings attached to the Nautanki actress. Kathryn Hansen's study *Grounds for Play* (1993), which situates Nautanki in its socio-historical contexts and provides insightful readings of Nautanki Sangeets, and Deepti Mehrotra's biography of Gulab Bai (2006), which provides sociological insights into the genre, are invaluable

accounts of social history. More importantly, they establish connections between the politics of gender, sexuality, and middle-class nationalist and colonialist constructions of Nautanki and its actors. Mehrotra also updates Hansen's work, both through her recovery of the detailed story of Gulab Bai, one of the most celebrated Nautanki actresses, and by throwing light on the contemporary financial, social, and artistic status of Nautanki and its reemergence in media, cinema, internet, and cultural festivals. However, barring cursory references to *Teesri Kasam*, there is little critical work that elaborates the connection of these films to Nautanki.

As documented research suggests, Nautanki is a popular form of theatre that belongs primarily to the Hindi-Urdu speaking regions of North India, in particular Hathras and Kanpur, and is a central means of entertainment among Dalits and working-class communities. Popular, glitzy, fantastic, and melodramatic, Nautanki dramas typically performed stories about historical figures, wars, and intrigues to convey messages about loyalty, love, moral duty and social and political questions and practices. Performed on make-shift stages at melas and festivals in villages and urban spaces, Nautankis, as time went by, adopted elaborate sets, costumes, drop curtains and painted sceneries and traveled across different localities and regions. Nautanki dramas also drew large crowds – mostly rural and working-class – and remained popular right through the colonial period. According to Mehrotra, Nautanki reigned as North India's most popular form of entertainment for nearly a century.

Originally an all-male theatre form, Nautanki became increasingly dominated by women from the 1930s onwards, when it acquired increased popularity. In the decades that followed, in Kanpur women came to dominate female roles and were paid better than men. Some even set up their own Nautanki Companies, hiring men as Company managers. Men continued to play male roles and instrumental music also remained in their hands (Mehrotra 2006: 244). The women who came into Nautanki belonged mostly to the 'Bedia or Tawaif Deredar Muslim families,' that earned their livelihood by 'singing and dancing' but 'were considered somewhat beyond the pale of respectability' (Mehrotra 2006: 85).[3] Interestingly, female spectatorship of these performances was also marked by class and caste. Women from 'respectable' families 'were supposed to keep at a distance from such tainted and independent women as well as from Nautanki performances, which were seen as being replete with obscene gestures. Men from their families sometimes frequented melas and Nautankis – although it was generally frowned upon' (Mehrotra 2006: 85). Those women attending Nautankis at the melas, where it was popular fare, were present only during the day and were expected to skip the night shows. The cast, actors, musicians and audience were largely Dalit, even though several upper-caste men joined Nautanki over time.

By the 1940s 'Nautankis adopted a wide spectrum of modern conventions' including 'the proscenium stage with painted backdrops, wings and front curtains separating performers and spectators; divisions of plays into scenes and acts; instruments such as harmonium and clarinet; lavish dresses and modern stagecraft' (Mehrotra 2006: 95). As well, it became integrated into the commercial market through ticket sales, abandoned its feudal hold and, similar to the 'studio system' in the Bombay film industry

3. The Bedia were nomadic tribes who took up various occupations for a living, including dance and performance. For more information, see Mehrotra, pp. 38–42.

of the time, developed Companies with salaried members on its staff. According to Mehrotra, 'As in Bombay, so also in Nautanki, a company theatre became known by the names of its heroes and heroines, musicians and directors. Box-office earnings were determined by the worth and work of all these combined together' (Mehrotra 2006: 96). Despite these 'modern' shifts in Nautanki, in the 1950s theatre artists and critics made a concerted effort towards reviving what they imagined as 'authentic' forms of folk and traditional theatre into modern urban life, in part because local forms such as Nautanki had been pushed to the cultural margins because of the dominance of European theatre in urban centers. Thus, paradoxically, the revival of folk forms represented an attempt at rejecting the 'modernity' of Indian theatre that came with the introduction, dominance and influence of proscenium style European theatres.[4]

The return to folk theatre in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s signaled the post-colonial nation's attempt to rediscover the nation's indigenous traditions and to carve out, through this rediscovery, an autonomous identity for itself soon after independence. This search for identity, through a return to folk forms, represented a decolonizing gesture on the part of theatre critics, directors, and playwrights, a trend that continued for several decades and resulted in the resurgence of forms such as Yakshanaga, Tamasha, Ras Lila, Nautanki and Bhavai in urban theatrical contexts. This revival was facilitated by increased governmental support from the national and state Sangeet Natak Akademies, through annual festivals held in Delhi and other places, and through intellectual attention from theatre critics in India and in the West (Hansen 1983: 77). Additionally, discussions at intellectual round tables, and statements by theatre personalities such as Suresh Awasthi, who was involved with the Sangeet Natak Akademy for a period of ten years, elevated folk theatres' stature. The results of this became evident in the experimentations with folk theatre by playwrights such as Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Karnad, Habib Tanvir and Badal Sircar. By the 1980s, the 'folk' came to be fully embraced in theatre circles through the efforts of societies, cultural festivals, and the various Akademies. Yet such revivalism also began to acquire a controversial status. Some critics identified it as a nationalistic ideal that either subsumed other forms of theatre or was appropriated by self-interested governmental bodies that resorted to these forms for achieving the projected ideals of the nation while ignoring the social and financial needs and realities of the folk theatre artists. Mehrotra cites several Nautanki artists, who discuss their difficulties in the face of financial problems and social prejudices. As one of her interviewees tells her:

> while Nautanki is being hailed as a folk art, its "folk" are not being valued. The form is still looked down upon, and not respected enough. Nautanki artists have remained cut off from social approval. Social attitudes towards women are cheap, intolerant and stereotyped.
>
> (Mehrotra 2006: 262)

As the above-mentioned quote suggests, another paradox of the revival of folk theatre was the persistence of biased attitudes towards Nautanki actors. Despite attempts to revive Nautanki as a valuable cultural artifact

4. For a detailed discussion on the 'modernity' of Indian theatre, see Aparna Dharwadker's *Theatres of Independence.*

of the nation's heritage, its actors continued to be seen as figures of social impropriety. Since the nation was being redefined by the middle-class, a woman's position and role in the nation also came to be re-imagined through middle-class standards of propriety. While Nautanki's reputation as 'vulgar' in the popular and largely middle-class imagination was derived in part from its lower-caste roots and secular outlook, the association that its women exhibited unconventional sexuality in the realm of the public, further contributed to this reputation that had persisted since colonial times.[5] Nautanki actresses, along with female performers generally, were seen as disrupting the image of the idealized Hindu woman whose role was to exercise a 'moral' influence on the sons and daughters of the nation (Chatterjee 1993). The story of Gulab Bai's talented Nautanki actress-daughter Asha represents an example of how her public life was suppressed. To her dismay, the man she agreed to marry did not allow her to act in Nautanki and 'set her up in a rented house in a middle-class locality in Kanpur' where 'he looked after her material needs' (Mehrotra 2006: 205). Prejudices such as these against female performers represent the continuation of earlier ones, which were reflected in the campaigns by colonial rulers and social reformers to outlaw the Devadasis, and were represented in debates about stage actresses in the press, in literary journals, and in popular magazines.[6] Not surprisingly, it was the theatre actresses who joined the cinema in the 1920s and 1930s, as '[r]espectable families wouldn't dream of allowing their daughters to act in public' (Mehrotra 2006: 293). Thus, many of the early film actresses came from families of performers: Nargis, Meena Kumari, Naaz, and Madhubala, all of whom began working in the film studios as young girls and were the sole bread earners for their families. Overall, the life of the Nautanki actress involved complex maneuvers and negotiations with middle-class nationalism that regarded her as 'disrespectful' and 'loose'

5. See Mehrotra, and Hansen, *Grounds for Play*.

6. See Amrit Srinivasan, 'Reform and Revival: The Devadasi and her Dance,' Rimli Bhattacharya's discussion in 'Actress Stories and the "Female" Confessional Voice in Bengali Theatre Magazines (1910–1925)' and Neera Adarkar, 'In Search of Women in History of Marathi Theatre, 1843 to 1933.'

Teesri Kasam and *Main Madhuri Dixit Banna Chahti Hoon*

Teesri Kasam coincides with the 1960s revival of folk theatre as integral to the assertion of a cultural nationalism that reclaimed the nation's indigenous forms as 'authentic,' forms that were deemed to have been obscured because of the dominance of European theatres under colonial rule. Based on Phanishwarnath Renu's short story 'Mare Gaye Gulfam' and translated in English as 'The Third Vow,' the film is centrally focused on the Nautanki dancer Hira Bai (played by Waheeda Rahman) and her growing closeness to Hiraman (played by Raj Kapoor), a cart-puller from a remote village in Bihar, who agrees to carry Hira Bai to a fair at a distance of forty miles. As such, the film's focus on Nautanki enables a number of interventions. On one level, it accords a legitimate space to Nautanki as an important part of India's cultural heritage. To this end, the name of the Company for which Hira Bai works also indicates a somewhat nationalistic affinity: 'The Great Bharat Nautanki Company.' As well, the film showcases a number of Nautanki songs, many of which have acquired the status of classics, as has the film despite its box office failure when it debuted and which resulted in a financial crisis for its producer. Additionally, the film familiarizes the audience with the form through 'authentic' speech patterns that encapsulate the simplicity of village life. The audience also gets a glimpse of the

sociological workings of Nautanki, its importance at melas, its spatial flexibility as a mobile theatre form, and generic parameters regarding the stage, actors and audiences. Importantly, *Teesri Kasam* also moves beyond the 'feudal family romance' plot which, according to Madhav Prasad, dominated Hindi cinema of the 1950s and 1960s, especially through the conventions of melodrama. While showcasing the melodramatic embeddings of Nautanki Sangeets, *Teesri Kasam* also resorts to a realism that attempts to frame the audience to identify, at some level, with its protagonists, especially through the innocence of Hiraman, which also endears him to Hira Bai – an endearment which takes on sexual and romantic overtones in the song and dance sequences. The film's long-term success can be gauged from the number of national awards it won, despite its failure at the box office, and the long-lasting imprint it has left on the popular imagination.[7]

Yet while the film exhibits Nautanki, it maintains the paradoxical construction of the actress-dancer. On the one hand, with its anti-modern stance, taken to serve the moment of nation-building that rejected modernity as a sign of westernization, in part by encouraging the recovery of village life, Hira Bai represents the anti-modern female figure that charms both Hiraman and the audience. Yet as a Nautanki dancer, Hira Bai transgresses established social norms by publicly dancing in front of a primarily male audience in the mixed-class space of the mela, and showing romantic interest in Hiraman. As a public performer, the fulfillment of her relationship with Hiraman would constitute a violation of accepted gender norms. Hence, even though Hira Bai and Hiraman fall in love and share intense tender moments, she ultimately decides to leave him. Caught between her personal desires and her awareness of the social stigma attached to her profession, she realizes that his association with her will considerably damage his social reputation. This is emphasized throughout the film through the attitudes of many of Hiraman's friends, as well as the landlord (played by Iftakhaar) who views her as a prostitute and makes sexual advances on her. Additionally, Hiraman's sister-in-law also views Nautanki with disdain and she discourages him from watching these shows. The personal conflict of Hira Bai, located in the stigma attached to her profession and public life is then resolved through an ending that maintains the ideological status-quo. While Hira Bai's decision to go back to the Company can be seen as an agentive act, it ultimately suggests the removal of the Nautanki dancer from the space of respectability as the appropriate course of action, and in so doing, seeks a restoration of acceptable feminine behavior. A heart-broken Hiraman, forced to say goodbye to Hira Bai, takes the 'third vow' of never carrying a woman in his cart; the first vow being his promise that he will never carry black-market goods after which the police nearly catch him, and the second one about never carrying bamboo, which had resulted in a minor accident and put his life and his cart in jeopardy.

Main Madhuri Dixit stands at the other end of the spectrum and speaks to a time when Nautanki has been integrated into the urban cultural scene, as evident in Radio and TV productions, and performances at theatre festivals such as Andhra Pradesh's 'Sangeet Natak Akademi' festival that included a Nautanki by the 'Gulab Theatre of Kanpur' in 2001, and the Hindi Akademi's performance of *Amar Singh Rathore* at Delhi's Triveni

7. According to the information on www.gomolo.in/Movie/MovieAwards.aspx?mid=3799. Accessed on October 31, 2008. In addition to the Filmfare and Screen Awards, *Teesri Kasam* received the BFJA Awards (1967) for Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Director, Best Playback Singer (male and female) and Best Screenplay.

Chamber Theatre in 2004 (Mehrotra 2006: 299). Unlike *Teesri Kasam*, this film is not a gender related morality tale but is singularly focused on its protagonist Chutki's (played by Antara Mali) desire to become a successful Bollywood heroine like Madhuri Dixit. In recent years, as Kathryn Hansen suggests, 'Bombay films have so elevated the image of the actress that painter M.F. Husain finds his eternal feminine in superstar Madhuri Dixit' (Hansen 1999: 127). These representations, she argues, 'carefully balance glamour with propriety, rendering the publicly displayed woman acceptable and reversing earlier attitudes of disquiet and avoidance' (Hansen 1999: 127). In fact, none of Chutki's careful manipulations for achieving her ambition – manipulations that include a pseudo-marriage with her village friend and companion Raja (played by Rajpal Yadav) so she can reach Bombay, her photo-shoot with Romiji, a young aspiring actor in Bombay who provides her with false leads for finding work, and her meetings with producers and men she does not know – are presented as transgressions of acceptable feminine behavior. Rather, the film presents Chutki's maneuvers as admirable traits that enable her to come closer to achieving her goals. As such, they also highlight the innocence associated with the gullible village girl unable to immediately see through the two-faced, sleazy and manipulative world of the big city and the cinema industry. That Nautanki itself is not treated as morally reprehensible is also reflected in Chutki's father's approval of her dancing for the village audience when her mother objects, a gesture that suggests that it is not seen as a stigmatized activity in the village. In fact, the representation of the village dancer's aspirations is disruptive of the dominant trends in post-1990s cinema that focus, through the fantasy frame, on upper middle-class protagonists and situations where 'the holiday in Switzerland and the designer titles are the reality of upper-middle class life' (Vohra 2008: 46).

Yet the film is not so much about representing Nautanki as it is about Bombay cinema. Even though Chutki develops her talent in the village and acquires self-confidence and self-assurance from her village audience, her desperation to become a film heroine privileges Bombay cinema and elevates the image of the cinema actress as the epitome of glamour. Instead of being central to the plot, the presence of Nautanki in the film thus consolidates the village/city, urban/rural and tradition/modernity binaries in which the city, urbanity, and modernity triumph. The latter is specially emphasized when a number of people in different studio scenarios laugh at Chutki's traditional attire and her village-like ways, and force her to recognize that she can only achieve success if she adopts a 'modern' outlook and appearance. The film, in fact, spends a whole scene on Chutki's visit to the beauty parlor where she is subjected to a complete makeover with changed hairstyle and color highlights that ostensibly transform her into a 'modern' girl.

Chutki's transformation, however, proves inadequate in the cut-throat world of Bombay cinema. In an interesting twist of plot, the film in which Chutki is promised a leading role against Amitabh Bachchan, Shahrukh Khan, Sunny Deol, and Hrithik Roshan (all of whom are ostensibly cast in the same film), turns out to be a marginal film being made by a fringe company from the South, with actors who are unknown lookalikes of this

star cast. Initially dismayed by this offer, Chutki realizes that this is the only chance she may have for exhibiting her acting and dancing talents and accepts. With this plot, the film seems to suggest that the proper space for the Nautanki dancer is the subordinate second level industry and not the dominant Bollywood variety. As a village girl unschooled in the ways of modernity, the only place available to Chutki after all her struggles is the second brand of cinema that cannot compete with the big budget corporate productions, which cater to middle-class audiences and, increasingly, to the South Asian diaspora. Despite her extreme talent in dancing and acting, Chutki's rural Nautanki background renders her unfit for the viewing pleasures of Bollywood audiences. While the film does critique such attitudes, it simultaneously affirms that regional cinema or Bollywood style imitations are what constitute appropriate acting spaces for her.

Chutki's experience is not unlike the experiences of those working with regional cinema forms. Director Dhananjay from Bihar, who in his days as a journalist had begun writing a book on Bhojpuri cinema, says that Bhojpuri films 'provide a space for those left behind in the Indian elite's embrace of modernity and Westernisation.'[8] So while it is established knowledge that the genre of Hindi cinema is itself derived from popular folk forms such as Nautanki and exhibits the traces of these folk forms, the message one receives from *Main Madhuri Dixit* is that for those who trail behind in the ways of modernity and westernization, the only space they can access is the second level cinema where, as in Bhojpuri films, the 'folk allure is significant' as is the 'world of fairs and festivals, the nautanki [drama], acrobats' performances, traveling musicians, courtesans and drama troupes.'[9] *Main Madhuri Dixit* conveys that for the globally aspiring Hindi cinema of the twenty-first century, this genre will not have much appeal. In so doing, *Main Madhuri Dixit* erases the complex dynamics of the Nautanki world, playing up instead the binary of modernity and tradition, which, as Madhav Prasad asserts, 'figures centrally, both thematically and as an organizing device, in popular film narratives' (Prasad 2008: 7).

Conclusion

While both *Teesri Kasam* and *Main Madhuri Dixit* derive their cultural capital from the use of the Nautanki tradition, in contemporary times the plight of Nautanki and its actresses remains contradictory. On the one hand, Nautanki's revival through State sponsorship, festivals, cultural societies and urban drama has brought it into the realm of the urban and made it accessible to social elites. Yet in reality Nautanki continues to suffer from lack of patronage, shrinking demand for shows, unemployment, lack of job security, and continuing derision. Mehrotra references the experiences of Harishchandra, the owner of 'Nautanki Prashikshan Kendra,' a school he set up in 1991, to show the kind of government apathy and prejudicial attitudes he has to confront, such as the refusal of a government official to sign a form because the official believed that Nautanki morally ruined people (Mehrotra 2006: 246).

In fact, Mehrotra presents Gulab Bai's story itself as encapsulating such contradictions. Having grown up in poverty, the actress-dancer shot to

8. Neelakantan 2006. http://www.himalmag.com/2006/october/special_report.htm. Accessed on April 20, 2008.

9. Neelakantan 2006: http://www.himalmag.com/2006/october/special_report.htm. Accessed on April 20, 2008.

fame and formed her own company in Kanpur named 'The Great Gulab Theatre Company' and achieved unprecedented success and recognition for her contribution to Nautanki during her lifetime. She received the Yash Bharati Award in 1995, the Sangeet Natak Akademy Award, and the Padamshree Award in 1990, which is one of the highest governmental honors. Yet faced with extreme financial difficulty because of shrinking audiences, reduced patronage, and competition from other forms of media entertainment,

> Gulab Bai died sad and bewildered, for the form she had devoted her life to crumbled to dust under her very eyes. Nautanki fell into a state of irretrievable decay and nothing she did could save it.
>
> (Mehrotra 2006: 232)

As well, Gulab Bai's story, argues Mehrotra, captures the complex interplay of gender and genre that has continued to play a role in perpetuating biased perceptions about popular theatres actresses and performers. Such perceptions and social prejudices against actresses and female performers were represented as far back as 1790 in Hasan Shah's *Nashtar* (*The Dancing Girl*), a novel about a dancing girl from Kanpur named Khanum Jaan, and in autobiographies such as the Bengali actress Binodini Dasi's *My Story*, which records the struggles she faced as an actress. A similar picture can be seen in the life-stories of film actresses such as Meena Kumari and Madhubala who came from performing communities, and in stories of Courtesans such as Umrao Jaan who has been the subject of at least one novel, two films by the same name, and a theatrical production by the Vivadi Collective from Delhi.[10] When Gulab Bai received the Padamshree award, the persistence of prejudicial social attitudes became evident in the prize citation, which, according to Mehrotra, attempted to restore her 'respectability' publicly by calling her Mrs Gulab Bai, even though she had never married and was a mother of several children (Mehrotra 2006: 14).

In real life then, as a cultural form that provides mass entertainment and livelihood for many men and women, and also inspires Hindi cinema, Nautanki remains largely marginalized. According to Mehrotra, the film industry stole Gulab Bai's songs that she had sung for HMV records, in particular 'Nadi Nare Na Jao' sung by Waheeda Rahman in *Mujhe Jeene Do* (1963) and 'Paan Khaye Saiyan Hamaro' in *Teesri Kasam*. Says Mehrotra:

> Bollywood…simply stole, brazenly and with impunity. Bollywood film directors, music directors and singers heard Gulab Bai's records and picked up the words and tunes. They made a fortune. Their growing popularity was partly based on the use of music people already identified with. But this glamorous industry failed to acknowledge the debt it owed to the simple folk in remote villages, or to a professional stage artiste named Gulab Bai.
>
> (Mehrotra 2006: 157)

One can argue that in drawing on Nautanki traditions and its songs, *Teesri Kasam* carries a consciousness about the 'folk' performing arts that dominated the cultural revivalist phase of the 1960s and represents cinema's

10. For a discussion of The Vivadi Collective's production of *Umrao*, see Dalmia, pp. 318–320.

early attempt at capturing the complexities of the female Nautanki dancer's negotiation of her private and public lives. *Main Madhuri Dixit* on the other hand, attempts to forge audience appeal through a reversal of this theme. While the film foregrounds the aesthetic of popular theatre, it ultimately elevates the appeal of Bollywood above the Bollywood-inspired Nautanki-style dances that she performs in her village. In so doing, the film, while exposing the hierarchies that operate in the cultural realm, simultaneously maintains the gradations of cultural forms that establish the cultural primacy of Bollywood over Nautanki.

Perhaps such ideological biases, which are simultaneously perpetuated and critiqued by Hindi cinema, continue to generate critical anxieties regarding the asymmetrical relationship between cinema and theatre. Such anxieties may indeed be valid if we are to heed the thematic and ideological assumptions of the two films, as discussed in this essay. Yet these films also raise questions about the ways in which dramatic forms and their practitioners negotiate the growing impact of the film industry. To this end, Lothar Lutze's essay, written in 1990 and mentioned in the introductory paragraph, provides a useful discussion of how regional folk theatres, 'in spite of cinema and television, still attract large audiences in their respective regions – *yakshgana* in Karnataka, *bhavai* in Gujarat, *nautanki* in Uttar Pradesh, *jatra* in Bengal, or, as a popular variety of religious folk theatre, the annual representation of the Ramlila … all over Northern India' (Lutze 1990: 210). As well, Lutze's assertion that many of the regional theatre forms have received attention in Hindi cinema should not be overlooked. Rather, it should be expanded to enable further examination of the function of such inclusions in Hindi cinema.

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Between the Godfather and the Mafia: Situating Right-Wing Interventions in the Bombay Film Industry (1992–2002)

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Abstract

Drawing primarily on trade press discourse, this article interrogates right-wing interventions in the Bombay film industry in the 1990s. It argues that there were unprecedented levels of investment by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Shiv Sena, both material and ideological, in Hindi cinema. It examines the changing dynamics between the State and Hindi cinema leading to 'industry' status in 1998 and its implications: the influential role of Shiv Sena leader Bal Thackeray as mediator of industrial disputes; the nexus between stars and politicians; underworld film financing; the use of the cinematic apparatus and exhibition sites for right-wing propaganda and electoral campaigning, and controversies over growing instances of partisan tax exemptions and national film awards. What is also suggested is that there were industrial shifts towards corporatisation in order to reinvent the Bombay film industry as a global player for diasporic consumption and investment, assisted by BJP-led State fiscal policies, incentives and conventions.

Keywords

Bombay film industry
Bharatiya Janata Party
Shiv Sena
Bal Thackeray
Right-wing interventions
Industry status

Industry Status for Bombay Cinema

On 10 May 1998, in an attempt to appease the restive clamour of the film world, industry status was granted to film by the Indian State under the aegis of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led-government, the political arm of the Hindu Right. This decision marked a watershed in the hitherto fraught relations that had existed between the State and Bombay cinema for over fifty years since independence. Addressing a large gathering of film personalities at a national conference on 'Challenges Before Indian Cinema', organized by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry and the Film Federation of India, the Information & Broadcasting (I&B) Minister Sushma Swaraj announced that the ministry would place a proposal in Parliament that would include films in the concurrent list,[1] thereby bringing it within the purview of the central government ('Industry Status Granted To Film Industry' 1998).

Industry status signified a dramatic shift in state policy towards Hindi cinema as an entertainment industry. Past governments had made empty promises to various industry delegations over the decades that exacerbated tensions between an indifferent and often draconian state and an increasingly anxious industry. So what prompted this decision that led to, 'the changing relations between the Indian state and Bombay cinema in a

1. The constitutional provisions in India on the subject of distribution of legislative powers between the Union and the States are covered in three lists of functions: (1) the Union list, (2) the State list, and (3) the Concurrent list which includes issues/topics that both the Union and State Government can legislate on. Until Swaraj's announcement, cinema had hitherto been under the state list.

global context' (Mehta 2005: 135) and what was at stake for the right-wing government? And more importantly, what could be the possible implications of this new status on the industry? I hope to answer some of these questions by tracing the process of negotiation initiated from the early 1990s between the Hindu Right (primarily the BJP and the Shiv Sena) and the Bombay film industry which, to some extent, may have anticipated the momentous decision of May 1998.

Conferring industry status on Bombay cinema could be read as an implementation of the BJP 1998 election manifesto on cinema which promised to take appropriate steps to protect the interests of the film industry if voted to power and offered the following six incentives, the first being particularly relevant to this discussion:

1. Allow film-makers through suitable provisions to raise resources from financial institutions to curb the influence of underworld
2. Have automatic certification of films that do not have explicit scenes, violence and sex
3. Offer 'Q' certificate to quality films, which will be exempted from entertainment tax
4. Set up theatres at all district headquarters and large population centres
5. Create special fund to promote regional cinemas
6. Introduce legislation to provide retirement benefits to artistes and crew (BJP Election Manifesto 1998: 'Our Policy on Media, Cinema, Arts', available at: http://www.bjp.org/manifes/chap17.htm.)

In the years preceding the landmark decision, the Bombay film industry was reeling under acute crises of arranging institutional finance, copyright violations, piracy and government apathy. Bombay cinema demanded industry status on the assumption that it would solve many of the aforementioned problems ('Film world demands industry status' 1997). Judging by the trade press reports, members of the film industry seemed naively optimistic in their anticipation of financial investments by the state and the belief that it would solve the numerous industrial problems plaguing the industry. Key members of the industry believed it was time for a national film policy to be devised since it was responsible for providing direct employment to one million people, and many more indirectly, and to facilitate the arrangement of institutional finance ('Film world demands…' 1997) as the quality of films was deteriorating due to dubious financiers. It was believed in some quarters that even though 'underworld money constitute(ed) only a fraction of film finance,' institutional financing (could) play a great role in eliminating even this small fraction from the film world ('Film world demands…', 1997).[2]

Underworld/Mafia funding and 'Black Money'

The only explicit reason for conferring industry status that was given by the BJP-led Indian state, was to weed out illegal sources of film financing by the mafia/underworld and a large volume of 'black money' (Shoesmith 2007: 320) that circulated in the Indian economy in general and, more specifically, in funding film productions. Arjun Appadurai

2. According to Sultan Ahmed, President of the Indian Motion Pictures Producers Association (IMPPA) in 1997.

offers a valuable insight into this murky world of film financing, observing the ubiquity of cash in it:

> Much of Bombay's film industry runs on cash – so-called black money. As a shrewd local analyst said to me, there is no real film *industry* [original emphasis] in Bombay, since there is no money that is both made and invested within the world of film. Rather, film financing is a notoriously gray area of speculation, solicitation, risk, and violence, in which the key players are men who have made killings in other markets (such as the grain trade, textiles, or other commodities). Some of them seek to keep their money out of the hands of the government, to speculate on the chance of financing a hit film and to get the bonus of hanging out with the stars as well. This sounds similar to the Hollywood pattern, but it is an entirely arbitrary cast of characters who might finance a film, so much time is spent by 'producers' in trolling for businessmen with serious cash on their hands. And since these bankrolls are very large, the industry pays blockbuster prices for stars, and the entire cultural economy of the film world revolves around large cash transactions in black money. Periodically, big stars or producers are raided by income tax officials, and a media bloodletting about seized assets is offered to the public, before business as usual resumes.
>
> (Appadurai 2000: 633)

Bombay is thus the site of contestation where realpolitik and the reel meet the underworld, resulting in a complex nexus of shady financial deals, money laundering and extortion rackets that exist due to the collusion of corrupt police and politicians.[3] Besides the involvement of the mafia in production and overseas rights, 'unaccounted money in real estate, stock brokerage, gold and diamond trade, as well as from politicians and political parties has found its way into the industry' (Gabriel 2005: 50). Recent scholarship by Brian Shoesmith and Noorel Mecklai refers to '…a certain degree of either tacit complicity between politicians, the underworld, and the Indian film industry, or coercion on the part of the BJP and its allies such as the Shiv Sena in Mumbai' (Shoesmith 2007: 321).

Relations between the state, Bombay cinema, and the underworld have historically been complex, making this area particularly challenging for empirical research and analyses. As Karen Gabriel confirms, 'although members of the industry are inclined to be tight-lipped especially on the matter of political interference and the role that the underworld plays in the industry, these are important factors' (Gabriel 2005: 49).

In an interview, Swaraj alluded to the 'convoluted state of affairs' of the industry and asserted that industry status to film would be the solution:

> If you are committed to good cinema, you will have to provide good finance. By according the status of industry, we have given pictures the much-needed eligibility to seek funds from legitimate places. Thus, a semblance of order is now possible in what has been a rather confused and convoluted state of affairs.
>
> (Quoted in Mehta 2005: 139)

Thus a simplistic equation was drawn and a direct causal connection made between 'good cinema' and 'good finance' without providing any hard evidence.

3. This murky film-mafia nexus came to the fore with the murder of music conglomerate owner, Gulshan Kumar in 1997, and the attempted killing of prominent film personalities such as producer Rakesh Roshan in 2000. There have been legal trials, notably of major film financier Bharat Shah and producer Nazim Rizvi in 2000. See Manjunath Pendakur (2003: 51–55) for more details.

Towards corporatization? Implications for the film industry

This new status enabled the film industry to be eligible for the infrastructural and credit support given to other industries. This watershed moment was soon followed by a series of other state-instituted changes (Mehta 2005: 136).[4] In October 2000, under the Industrial Development Bank Act, the film industry was eligible for financial support from 'legitimate' institutions. The Union Budget proposals for 2000–1 offered concessions to the film industry by reducing the cost of raw film, customs duty on cameras and other film equipments, and extending income-tax benefits under section 80HHF to non-corporate bodies ('Union Budget Gives Benefits To Film Industry' 2000). For the first time in 2000, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) organised an 'International Conference on the Business of Entertainment: INDIA – Opportunities in the 21st Century' that was inaugurated by the Union Minister of Information & Broadcasting (I&B) Arun Jaitley, who in his address gave indications that 'the Centre was keen to help the industry which had been ignored for far too long' and released a FICCI report prepared by Arthur Anderson on the entertainment industry (Sen-Gupta & Gupta 2000). It was followed in successive years by FRAMES 2001 and FRAMES 2002, FICCI-sponsored global conventions, the first of which was inaugurated by Swaraj who reiterated that 'the government (was) committed to nurturing the entertainment sector and expanding the market size in India and abroad' ('FRAMES 2001: 2001). In May 2001, Swaraj led a 25-member delegation to Cannes to promote overseas sales of Indian films (Mehta 2005: 136) and even personally 'designed a special logo to give a distinct identity to the Indian film industry abroad' ('Sushma Swaraj Designs Special Logo for Indian Films', 2002).

As Monika Mehta points out, to fully understand the significance of the industry status it is imperative to examine the historical conjuncture in which this decision was taken. The changing attitude of the state towards Bombay cinema should be situated against the backdrop of two other significant developments. Firstly, it was the era of economic liberalization; this imposed certain economic imperatives on the Indian state, forcing it to open its markets to western products and culture, and become a global player. Secondly, 'during the same period, both the Bombay film industry and the state began pursuing Indian diasporic communities' (Mehta 2005: 136) since they emerged as valued audiences in Bombay's box-office figures and desired investors in the Indian state's political, economic, and cultural plans. Mehta makes a significant observation which could possibly explain, to some extent, the interest of the BJP-led State in the industry. She argues that 'by designating film as an industry, and thereby bringing an "unorganized" and "informal" sector of the economy under its purview, the state was actively attempting to (re)inscribe its authority in the context of globalization' (Mehta 2005: 137).

It is not a mere coincidence that it was the BJP-led government that finally met the film world's longstanding demand for state recognition. Observing that 'the rise of cultural nationalist politics signified by the Hindu nationalist and pro-business Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) (was an)

4. According to Mehta (2005: 136): 'In 1998, Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha granted many long-standing demands of the film industry, including reduction in custom duties on cinematographic film, exemption of recorded audio and video cassettes from excise duties, and tax incentives, to name a few. In 2000, Sinha added further concessions including a complete exemption on export profits, further reduction in import duties on cinematographic equipment, and more tax incentives.'

important factor in the state's shifting attitudes toward the Hindi film industry' (Ganti 2004: 51), Tejaswini Ganti points out:

> It is no surprise that it was a BJP government that granted industry status since the party's support base is heavily drawn from petty traders and small businessmen who comprise the vast distribution, exhibition, and finance apparatus for Hindi filmmaking.
>
> (Ganti 2004: 51)

I would like to suggest that the BJP government wanted to harness a powerful, creative mass medium that had thrived despite state censure, neglect and suspicion. By awarding industry-status to the world's most prolific film-making machinery, the state, under the aegis of the BJP-led government, was both officially recognizing the mass appeal, reach and popularity of the cinematic medium as well as the export potential of Bombay cinema as a global commodity for diasporic consumption and investment. It was also reacting to the process of globalization by making the hitherto shady business of film financing legitimate and 'cleaning up its act' in order to meet global standards for attracting prospective exports and investments from affluent diasporic communities. Corporate status enabled the state to officially distance itself from the ill repute of mafia money.

In the weeks following the corporate status of film, the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI) issued a set of 'norms' for financing films:

> The IDBI has said that to be eligible for its film-financing scheme, the movie should have a capital of Rs. 5 crore [50 million] to Rs. 25 crore [250 million] for Hindi films and Rs. 30 lakh [300,000] to Rs. 10 lakh [100,000] for regional films. The scheme says no two films should be the same and the investment would vary *depending on the 'treatment' of the story or concept and scale of production* . . . [added emphasis].
>
> (Mehta 2005: 141–2)

As Mehta observes:

> In recognizing film as property, the state which is formally in charge of protecting and safeguarding the rights to property is able to control the kind of films produced. In making a distinction between Hindi and regional films and prescribing a larger amount of initial capital for the former and a lesser one for the latter, this policy seeks to (re)inscribe the dominance of Hindi and Bombay cinema both nationally and internationally.
>
> (Mehta 2005: 142)

Thus, this decision couldn't be taken at face value for it came with strings attached and much deeper implications for the industry. As reflected by the aforementioned norms, the IDBI policy didn't offer easy recourse to film financing. Instead it privileged established producers and discriminated against regional films (although creating a special fund to promote regional cinemas was one of the incentives mentioned in the 1998 BJP manifesto). Instead, 'through a host of rules mandated and enforced by

state supported financial institutions, the policy sought to transform the nature of the film industry' (Mehta 2005: 142). While Bombay cinema desired the benefits that resulted from corporatization, such as legitimate financing and larger markets, this process also extended the authority of state-supported financial institutions through a new set of rules imposed on the production and marketing of films.

Extending Mehta's argument, I would suggest that the state, through these financial institutions, could decide which films received financing whilst discriminating against those productions it didn't think fit for state sponsorship. This came strikingly close to resembling state patronage and signaled unprecedented level of interventions in the creative process, even at the pre-production stages of film-making. Thus, industry status could be seen as a justification and a pretext for the increasingly regulative authority of a state-supported financial institution.

I argue that granting industry status was an opportunity created by the BJP-led state to control Hindi film production, which hitherto had been largely unorganized and beyond direct governmental control, particularly regarding financing films. This is further confirmed by reports of a proposal to transfer cinema from the state to the concurrent list, which was 'widely seen as the centre expanding its power at the cost of the state exchequer' and attacked by several opposition-ruled states which alleged that the centre was acting with a 'vested interest' ('Films To Come On Concurrent List' 2001).

In the following sections I trace the BJP/Shiv Sena's decade-long interventions to promote a Hindu nationalist ideology in the Bombay film industry since it had 'recognized the value of film as a political tool from its earliest days in the 1980s' and had 'employed film techniques to advance the cause of Hindutva'[5] (McGuire 2007: 8). In order to achieve this, the Hindu Right adopted various strategies ranging from negative pressures, primarily from the Shiv Sena leader Bal Thackeray and his cohorts, to establishing dialogue with important industry members; giving incentives such as national awards, tax exemptions and arranging free screening of films that espoused the nationalist agenda, using celebrities for electoral purposes, socializing and attending previews/premieres and using theatrical exhibition to disseminate Hindutva propaganda.

The Role of Shiv Sena and Bal Thackeray in the Bombay film industry

It is of immense significance that Bombay is both the home of the Shiv Sena, '…the most markedly xenophobic regional party in India…' (Appadurai 2000: 629) and the Hindi film industry. Therefore it is not surprising that the fluid spheres of politics and cinema permeate, intervene and overlap to form complex and often unequal ties between influential politicians and obsequious film personalities, many of whom owe their careers to the 'patronage' of the Shiv Sena leader Bal Thackeray. His weakness for the world of Hindi cinema is well-known, having family connections in the industry. His father, 'Prabodhankar' Thackeray, a famous social reformer, had a brief stint as a publicist with Homi Wadia's film company in the 1940s. His brother, Shreekant, a renowned music director,

5. Hindutva literally translates as 'Hinduness', coined by V. D. Savarkar, denoting nationalist, revivalist, chauvinistic Hinduism that forms the basis of Hindu right-wing ideology and the movement for a Hindu nation.

produced a few Marathi films and reviewed Hindi blockbusters for the Shiv Sena mouthpiece, *Maarmik* (Mishra: 2001b).

Bombay, the home of the Shiv Sena, was the vortex of extreme nationalist politics unlike any other Indian city. Writing in 2000, when nationalist fervour was at its peak, Appadurai succinctly elucidates the Shiv Sena credo:

> Today the Shiva Sena controls the city and the state and has a significant national profile as one of the many parties that form the Sangh Parivar (or coalition of Hindu chauvinist parties). Its platform combines language chauvinism (*Marathi*), regional primordialism (a cult of the regional state of Maharashtra), and a commitment to a Hinduized India (Hindutva, the land of Hinduness). It has created a relatively seamless link between its nativist, pro-Maharashtrian message and a national politics of confrontation with Pakistan.
>
> (Appadurai 2000: 629)

Much has been written in the trade press and the print media about the ubiquity and omnipresence of Balasaheb Thackeray, 'the vitriolic head of the Shiva Sena', (Appadurai 2000: 644) in Bombay: his nexus with the film industry and the nefarious activities of his henchmen and party workers. Shoesmith and Mecklai observe that the Shiv Sena was 'seeking to coerce some members of the powerful film industry into alignment with their ideological position' and also mentioned that the 'Shiv Sena leader Bal Thackeray's involvement with the film industry (was) well documented' (Shoesmith 2007: 321).

In 1993, Hindi films starring allegedly 'anti-national' stars, such as the popular action-hero Sanjay Dutt,[6] held under the TADA[7] for illegal possession of guns, and Pakistani and Indian artistes collaborating with such artistes were blacklisted by the right-wing, their films boycotted and even banned. This prompted an industry delegation to meet the BJP All India General Secretary, Pramod Mahajan, to resolve several agitations that were taking place against Sanjay Dutt films and other artistes. In denying any such party activities, Mahajan clarified that BJP was 'not at all interested in such a move by which the film industry's day-to-day business [was] interfered' ('IMPDA Delegation Meets B.J.P. Leader' 1993). However the objective of this article is to provide evidence to the contrary by revealing the interventionist strategies of the BJP/Shiv Sena in the daily workings of the film business.

In keeping with the Shiv Sena's jingoistic nationalism and demonization of Pakistan and/or the Muslim as the enemy/'Other', the Shiv Sena 'supremo' Bal Thackeray threatened that he would obtain a list of film personalities who attended Pakistan Day celebrations and call for a country-wide ban on their films. Having already received the names of two Muslim stars (the legendary doyen of Hindi cinema, Dilip Kumar and the star actress Shabana Azmi), it was reported that Thackeray would not allow films to be screened in the country even if those affected by the boycott were Hindu producers ('Thackeray Threatens To Boycott Star', 1993). Thackeray's actions exemplify Appadurai observations on how Shiv Sena's nationalist ideology '…sutured a specific form of regional chauvinism

6. One of Hindi cinema's successful actors, Sanjay Dutt, was convicted on 30th July 2007, for six years, on the last day of an epic trial into one of India's worst terrorist attacks, the bombings in Mumbai in 1993 that claimed the lives of 257 people. Dutt, whose early success was founded on action hero roles but later turned his hand to comedy, was found guilty of illegally possessing three AK-56 rifles, a pistol and ammunition in a trial that lasted more than a dozen years. See Ramesh ('Bollywood star Sanjay Dutt jailed for six years' 2007).

7. TADA, an acronym for The Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, was an Indian law active between 1985 and 1995 (modified in 1987) for the prevention of terrorist activities in Punjab. It was renewed in 1989, 1991 and 1993 before being allowed to lapse in 1995 because of increasing unpopularity due to widespread allegations of abuse.

with a national message about Hindu power through the deployment of the figure of the Muslim as the archetype of the invader, the stranger, and the traitor' (Appadurai 2000: 646).[8]

Besides assuming the role of aggressor, Bal Thackeray's 'moral support,' consent and approval was often sought by popular actresses like Manisha Koirala before agreeing to act in any potentially controversial film ('Manisha Koirala Denies Having Approached Balasaheb' 1996). Many years later, in 2002, the actress would seek Bal Thackeray's intervention in resolving a dispute with the film director of *Ek Chhotisi Love Story* (2002) over an injunction order regarding allegedly 'obscene' scenes. This would anger both the film industry for 'taking the help of a political party known for its violent ways' ('Sena Chief will mediate to end *Ek Chhotisi* row' 2002) as well as the ire of the Bombay High Court which decided to issue contempt notices to Koirala and Nair, seeking an explanation from both as to why they had sought the intervention of an 'extra-constitutional authority' when the court was already dealing with the matter (Mishra, 2002c).

The Shiv Sena leader often acted as a mediator during strikes and rifts between trade unions such as Film Makers Combine (F.M.C) and the Film Distributors Combine (F.D.C),[9] and assumed the role of arbiter in industrial disputes such as during the troublesome issue of the entertainment tax in 1996/7. This particular mediation was akin to almost divine intervention.

In an attempt to quell rumours of the growing politicisation of the industry, a vehement denial of any involvement by either the Shiv Sena or its leader was published[10] as a page-long statement in *Trade Guide*. This seemed to confirm, rather than deny, the extent of the politicization of the film industry:

> Shri Balasaheb Thackeray Not To Attend Any Function of Film Industry
>
> Shri Balasaheb Thackeray has clarified that he is not going to attend any function or *mahurat* [premiere] in the film industry. We hereby state that neither our Balasaheb Thackeray nor the Shiv Sena are in any way involved in any film project.
>
> (*Trade Guide*, 3 August 1996)

Neither trade press reports, photographic records nor interviews divulge as much about Thackeray's insidious ties with the Bombay film industry as does the aforementioned advert, which reads like a self-confession. Thackeray continues to be an authorial godfather figure under whose shadow the Bombay film industry lives, many in fear of their lives and livelihood as it is common knowledge that survival and success in the industry is almost impossible without either the tacit or active support of the ubiquitous 'supremo'[11] ('Thackeray Threatens to Boycott Star', 1993).

Besides the extraordinary influence wielded by Thackeray, as exemplified by the entertainment tax stalemate, the Shiv Sena's *Chitrapat Shakha*[12] influenced industry decisions to a great extent admitting that although it was not connected with the paying public, it took full interest and responsibility for all developments that occurred in the film trade. According to Maithili Rao,[13] a well-known Bombay-based film critic, the film trade

8. Appadurai (2000: 646) says that, 'The Shiva Sena has achieved this suture by a remarkably patient and powerful media campaign of hate, rumor, and mobilization, notably in the party newspaper *Saamna*, which has been the favorite reading of Mumbai's policemen for at least two decades.'

9. See Pendakur (2003: 84–88) for more details on the principal industrial production and distribution organizations in the 1990s.

10. It was published in the name of the chief of the *Chitrapat Shakha*, G. P. Shirke.

11. In the trade press discourse Bal Thackeray is frequently referred to as the "Shiv Sena supremo."

12. A branch of the Shiv Sena that dealt chiefly with film industry issues.

13. Personal interview with her in Bombay & a follow-up e-mail questionnaire, 28th May, 2007.

unions had been infiltrated by members of the Shiv Sena, once the bastion of the Left (Communist). Hindi cinema in the 1950s was influenced by a variety of factors particularly the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) which was a theatre movement informally affiliated to the Communist Party of India (CPI).[14] However, due to the growing influence of right-wing politics of the Shiv Sena over the years, there was the steady erosion of other political influences in the industry. Particularly significant is the fact that Thackeray's daughter-in-law, Smitha Thackeray, was elected as president of the film industry's oldest producers' association, the Indian Motion Picture Producers' Association (IMPPA) for two consecutive years, from 2001–03, testifying the Thackeray family's clout in the film industry ('Smitha Thackeray Heads IMPPA Again' 2000).

The Indian state and Hindi cinema: A brief historical background

It is significant to note that no political party, not even the Indian National Congress (INC), had spent as much time and effort establishing dialogue with the cine-world as the BJP–Shiv Sena Combine did in the 1990s. For Maithili Rao:

> the BJP's pursuit of cultural nationalism and xenophobia (was) a contrast to the implicit underlying idea of internationalism among communist and Congress trade unions. The narrow parochialism of the BJP (was) apparent in all the organisations it ha(d) formed.[15]

The aforementioned Union budget proposals, negotiations and international conventions held to discuss the future growth potential of the entertainment industry initiated by the BJP-led government implied a significant departure from earlier decades of state censure, highhandedness and neglect often harking back to colonial times. As Ganti writes: 'Rather than perceiving it as a vice, the Indian state, since the late 1990s, perceives commercial film-making as a viable, important, legitimate economic activity that should be nurtured and supported' (Ganti 2004: 50).

From colonial times the Bombay film industry has been a site of intense contestation between the Indian state and Hindi cinema. According to Ganti:

> the Indian state did not accord filmmaking much economic significance, despite the fact that after independence, it was the second largest 'industry' in India in terms of capital investment, the fifth largest in the number of people employed, and the second largest film industry in the world.
>
> (Ganti 2004: 44)

Rather than thinking of the dominant mode of film-making as aiding the economic development of India, state policies of taxation and licensing accorded it the status of a vice. Cinema has been an object of government regulation in India since the colonial period through censorship, taxation, allocation of raw materials, and control over exhibition through the licensing of theatres. For many years, the Hindi film industry put forward its list of demands to the Finance Minister prior to the annual budget, asking for concessions. These demands included the reduction or removal of

14. Founded in 1943 in Bombay by a group of progressive writers, musicians, actors, artists, and activists, IPTA's manifesto was socialist, based on freedom, social justice and the recognition of the rights of workers. Many prominent actors, composers, directors, lyricists, and writers from the Bombay film industry had been involved in this movement prior to their work in cinema. From this involvement came a concern and tendency to depict the lives and troubles of the downtrodden, marginalized segments of society, to point out the exploitative nature of capitalism, and romanticise and valorise the poor (Ganti 2004: 28).

15. E-mail correspondence with Maithili Rao, 6 June 2008.

import duty on raw stock since raw stock is not produced in India, the exemption of film-makers' export earnings from income tax and the most contentious issue between the film industry and the state at the regional level; the entertainment tax- with filmmakers recommending the central government to either reduce, standardize (it varies from state to state) or abolish the tax altogether. Cinema has also been a 'problem' warranting the attention of a number of government commissions, inquiries and symposia in independent India, such as the 1951 Film Enquiry Committee, the Khosla Committee on Film Censorship in 1968 and the Working Group on National Film Policy in 1980 (Ganti 2004: 47–48).

Ganti makes an interesting argument that:

> The roots of the Indian state's antipathy toward cinema can be found in the attitudes of nationalist leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. The Indian National Congress (INC) did not accord the medium much importance, most leaders viewing cinema as 'low' and 'vulgar' entertainment, popular with the uneducated masses … Both Gandhi's view of cinema as corrupting, and Nehru's view of film as a tool for modernization have crucially shaped state policy and rhetoric toward cinema in independent India. Gandhi's moralism and nativism and Nehru's internationalism and modernism are present in prohibitive policies such as censorship and taxation, and in developmental policies that established a cultural and cinematic bureaucracy to counter the dominance of the commercially oriented film industries.
>
> (Ganti 2004: 46–47)

I believe that these preconceptions persisted over the decades during the lengthy tenure of the Congress Party at the helm. Thus, a striking characteristic of this state-generated discourse about cinema was the intense ambivalence expressed toward cinema and its practitioners. Historically, the dominant tone about the Bombay film industry was that it churned out escapist, frivolous and formulaic cinema, for 'mere entertainment' which was not 'meaningful' or 'artistic' enough. Elected officials and bureaucrats throughout the decades exhorted filmmakers to make 'socially relevant' films with a pedagogical purpose. In an attempt to foster 'good' cinema and counter the dominant mode of film-making (as represented by the Bombay industry) the Indian state established a vast cinematic bureaucracy. Following the recommendations of the 1951 Film Enquiry Committee, the central government expanded its relationship with cinema beyond censorship and taxation by setting up the Film Finance Corporation (FFC) in 1960, which later became the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) in 1980. While NFDC has been relatively successful in producing films, it has never fulfilled its promises of developing an alternative distribution and exhibition network. Other government institutions set up to promote 'quality' cinema are: the National Film Archive; the Film and Television Institute which trains actors and technicians, the Films Division that produces both national and regional newsreels and documentaries and the Directorate of Film Festivals which organises film festivals, operates the Cultural Exchange Programme for films and sponsors films for international festivals (Ganti 2004: 49: 50).

Bridging the gap between industry and the Hindu Right

Regular interaction between right-wing politicians and influential representatives of the film industry characterized much of the decade of the 1990s. Frequent meetings were held, charter of demands presented and delegations sent by the BJP to establish dialogue, thereby attempting, to influence and sometimes coerce the industry into adopting its Hindutva agenda.

In May 1993 the *Trade Guide* ('F.M.C. Delegation Meets B.J.P. Leader') reported a joint meeting between the BJP and members of the Film Makers Combine (F.M.C.) supposedly leading to a secret deal that accepted the party's charter of demands. Among the conditions accepted were:

> *No ridiculing of Hindu sentiments in any film* [added emphasis] as also sentiments of other religions; members of the industry charged, arrested and under investigation in anti-national activities will be suspended till proved innocent; artistes, male and female, posing nude for magazines, will be banned; *Members of the industry should not criticize or condemn Hindus involved in the Ayodhya*[16] *movement or maha-aartis* [added emphasis].[17]

In 1994, a delegation from the BJP Film Cell met the Censor Board Chairman Shakti Samanta and submitted a memorandum demanding more stringent censorship which read as follows:

> 1) No feature-film should be allowed on TV without prior permission of C.B.F.C 2) All vulgar songs, in words and picturization, should be deleted from films 3) There should not be any political influence while choosing members on the C.B.F.C. panel. Instead, people from the industry should be given more representation.
>
> ('B.J.P. Film Cell Meets C.B.F.C. Chairman' 1994)

An assurance was given to the delegation that immediate steps would be taken within a week's time, failing which the B.J.P. Film Cell would organize mass-protests everywhere ('B.J.P. Film Cell Meets C.B.F.C. Chairman' 1994). In a press release sent to the *Trade Guide*, the BJP Film Cell issued a strong statement: 'we warn such producers that even if they manage to get a censor certificate, our *janandolan*[18] would not let them show these films in theatres' ('B.J.P. Film Cell Warns of Action' 1994).

The formation of the BJP 'Film and Television Forum'

In 1996, at the inaugural function of the BJP Film & Television Forum the Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra announced that the BJP – Shiv Sena state government was ready to create a corporation with a corpus to finance films. The forum, in its germinal concept, seemed to anticipate the industry status which would be awarded by the BJP Central Government in less than two years. The Deputy Chief Minister further stated that the Forum would 'play a constructive role in bridging the gap between the government and the film industry …' ('B.J.P. Film & Television Forum Formed' 1996), a euphemism for overt interference by the right-wing in the industry. Nitish Bharadwaj, a television actor who had enjoyed immense popularity in the role of the mythic god Krishna, would be the

16. The demolition of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya, supposedly the birthplace of the mythic god Ram, was a rallying point for all Hindu nationalists and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) who had launched a movement in 1984, The Ram Janmabhoomi – Babri Masjid for the building of a temple to the mythic god Ram on the site of this mosque. In a dubious rewriting of history by the Hindu Right, it was allegedly the original site of a temple that had been destroyed by a marauding Muslim ruler Babur who invaded the Indian subcontinent in the sixteenth century. This movement gathered momentum in the 1990s and formed an integral part of the BJP/NDA electoral manifesto.

17. See Appadurai (2000: 647) on the ethnocidal uses of this new ritual innovation by the Shiv Sena in Bombay.

18. Hindi word meaning 'Mass Agitation'.

President of the BJP Films & Television Forum; a move which highlighted the growing star power in right-wing politics ('B.J.P. Film & Television Forum Formed', 1996).

Celebrities and Right-wing Electoral Campaigning

The phenomenon of film stars joining or supporting party politics can be traced much before the decade of the 1990s, a practice that cut across party lines. In the pre-Independence era, stalwarts like producer Chandulal Shah and singer-actress Jaddan Bai gave generous donations to Mahatma Gandhi's epic struggle against the British. Literateurs and artistes such as Balraj Sahani, Shailendra, Dina Pathak and Majrooh Sultanpuri were closely associated with the Left movement and even campaigned for the Communist Party of India during elections. The cinema-politics bond continued during the Nehru and Indira Gandhi eras. Actors Raj Kapoor and Dilip Kumar were star campaigners for Krishna Menon when he fought the Lok Sabha elections against Acharya Kriplani in 1962, whilst Sunil and Nargis Dutt and Manoj Kumar had close ties with the Congress party under Indira Gandhi.

However, despite these close associations, actually contesting an election or enrolling as a member of a political party didn't occur till the early 1980s when Rajiv Gandhi and his think-tank hit upon the idea of enlisting film personalities into the Congress. Thus, in the 1984 Lok Sabha elections the star actors Amitabh Bachchan, Sunil Dutt and actress Vyajayanthimala Bali were given party nominations and their victories ushered in a new era of the star politician (Rajashyaksha 1996).

However, it was the sheer participatory force of film and television celebrities that made the right-wing electoral campaign remarkable, prompting a leading newspaper to label it as 'the politics of greasepaint' (Rajashyaksha 1996). The purpose of celebrities in politics was, according to the National Convenor of the Cultural Cell of BJP, 'to collect crowds … as celebrities attract people … can get people to listen to them. People want to meet them, listen to them. But many celebrities have political acumen like Shatrugan Sinha, Raj Babbar and survive as politicians and celebrities.'[19] Radha Rajashyaksha highlights the film-politics nexus by observing that:

> though 1996 speaks of an unprecedented desperation in this sphere, Indian politics has long been associated with film folk who have either campaigned for political parties or actually stood for elections … In 1991, the Bharatiya Janata Party, whose president L.K. Advani had earlier decried such tactics, proposed the candidature of Arvind Trivedi (who would become the Chairman of the Censor Board of India in 2002) and Deepika Chikhalia, actors who played the roles of the mythic characters Ravana and Sita in the phenomenally popular teleserial *Ramayana*,[20] for the Lok Sabha elections.
>
> (Rajashyaksha, 1996)

The BJP clearly saw in these popular, mythic figures a chance of extending their reel roles into a ballot-box opportunity.

The Hindu Right's unique brand of nationalist politics turned electoral campaigning into a spectacle for mass participation. Much had been written about the Right's flamboyant, performative style of mass mobilization

19. Telephone interview with Sri Gagendra Chauhan, National Convenor of the Cultural Cell of BJP, Mumbai, October 2007.

20. One of two Hindu epics, the other being *Mahabharata*.

of the electorate, by political scientists, historians and communications scholars – in particular by Arvind Rajagopal in *Politics after Television*.[21] Shoesmith and Mecklai propose that, 'the politically astute BJP drew much of its electoral momentum in the mid-1980s from the Hindi film spectacular' (Shoesmith 2007: 321). As a former film critic for *Organiser*, a right–wing party magazine, and a former I & B minister, L.K. Advani, chief ideologue of the BJP, was aware of the power of both the electronic media and of films ('Soft core between the hard line' 2002). The cross-country *rath yatras* (chariot trails) by politicians dressed as epic characters seeking votes: the elaborate, public rituals and *yagnas* (fire-worship) were an integral part of the electoral campaign to visually astound the masses into frenzied devotion and submission. Shoesmith and Mecklai suggest that 'by adapting such film techniques to politics', the BJP constructed 'a solid support base for the Hindu Right from the vast, already-disaffected constituency of filmgoers' (Shoesmith 2007: 321).

Bharadwaj is an excellent example of a celebrity being used as a political tool for electoral propaganda. There was slippage between the man and the character he played – gullible voters swayed by religious fervour believed that they were supporting Lord Krishna whilst he was role-playing for electoral gains, dressed in flamboyant costumes exhorting the masses to pay homage by casting their votes for the BJP. It was an instance of the 'willing suspension of disbelief.' Yet, as Joshua Meyrowitz has pointed out, 'because politics is a dramatic ritual, it is ultimately impossible to separate the thread of reality from the thread of performance' (Gamson 1994: 190).

According to a veteran politician, 'Film stars are misused and exploited by political parties, but they don't mind because the spin-offs are good … like favours granted by the ruling party if an actor happens to be campaigning for it, or power, money and publicity' (Rajashyaksha, 1996). In Indian politics, the party is a brand which the model, in this case the film star, endorses ('Ideology? What's that?' 1998). Even the then President of India, Mr. Narayanan, whilst addressing the 45th National Film awards ceremony in 1998, remarked on the cine world's 'indulgence in the froth and bubble of politics' ('"Industry status to cinema will help workers': Narayanan', 1998). In 2002 the marriage of politics and cinema reached its zenith with the appointment of Vinod Khanna and Shatrughan Sinha, two celebrity actors, as central ministers by the then-Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. According to the trade publication, *Film Information*, 'it [was] for the first time that stars of the Bombay film industry [had] become ministers in the central government', although South Indian stars like M.G. Ramachandran, N.T. Rama Rao and Jayalalitha had led their parties successfully in the state elections to become chief minister ('Bombay Stars in Central Ministry' 2002). For film historian Feroz Rangoonwala, 'present developments [were] both disheartening and ridiculous, star presence [having] increasingly become ornamental in politics, especially with the BJP' ('Star presence has become ornamental in politics', 2002). However to quote Joshua Gamson: 'the spread of rationalized celebrity culture is perhaps inevitable, especially in the political arena, where consumption [in this case, votes] is so similarly affected by attention' (Gamson 1994: 191).

21. See Rajagopal (2001). In his study Rajagopal asserts a causal link between the broadcast of the Hindu mythological epic, *Ramayana,* and its catalytic impact in changing the terms of cultural and political discourse and therefore paving the way for the electoral victory of the BJP. He argues that the broadcast of the serial on national television provided, for the first time, a single field of social connectivity across the nation and brought into salience the differences in India's split publics.

Film exhibition sites for premieres & propaganda screenings

The following section examines the manner in which the extraordinary mass appeal of Hindi cinema was exploited for electoral propaganda, using the cinema hall as a channel for the dissemination of nationalist propaganda. As mentioned before, the Hindu Right had long recognized the immense power and reach of film propaganda, in representational terms of its popular Hindi tunes and lyrics, and its unique exhibition mode required by the cinematic apparatus.

On several occasions, and with alarming frequency, special previews of selected films were screened for important right-wing politicians; and politicians were made guests of honour at film premieres, audio-cassette releases and/or at film award ceremonies. There are numerous photographs of such occasions in trade papers as both politician and celebrity were aware of being privileged to be in the company of the other and happy for being recorded for the sake of posterity.

Cinema halls and *Hindutva* electoral propaganda

As part of its electoral campaign, the BJP screened propaganda material such as video cassettes during intervals at cinema halls in the hope of reaching 'a large section of the people through this publicity channel' ('BJP Poll Campaign enters Cinema Halls' 1996). According to a 1996 *The Times of India* report, the BJP released a two-minute video cassette entitled *Parivartan ki Ore* (Towards Transformation) which was intended for screening in over 3,000 cinema theatres nationwide and in almost all Lok Sabha constituencies. According to party general-secretary and central election committee secretary Pramod Mahajan, the documentary in Hindi would be shown during the interval and on cable networks such as Jain TV and NAPC. Besides Mahajan, the party president, L.K. Advani, former party president Murli Manohar Joshi, the party's prime ministerial candidate Atal Behari Vajpayee and Sushma Swaraj were among those featured in the film that 'exhort(ed) the people to vote for the BJP for a better tomorrow' ('BJP Poll Campaign enters Cinema Halls', 1996).

The BJP had also devised a unique way of promoting its prime ministerial candidate by releasing a song-based short film in 35mm which would be screened in approximately 1,000 cinema halls across the country (Kulkarni-Apte: 1998b). The song titled *Neta Bas Ek Atal Ho* (A Leader like Atal) would emphasize Vajpayee's oratory skills and leadership qualities, clearly suggesting that he was the best and only alternative to lead the nation (Kulkarni-Apte: 1998a). Quite significantly, *The Times of India* reported that it would be the first time that a political party in India would be campaigning on the big screen (Kulkarni-Apte: 1998b).

A sequence showing Indians and foreigners alike standing for the Indian national anthem in *Kabhi Kushi Kabhi Gham*/Sometimes Happy, Sometimes Sad (2001, referred to as K3G) became a ploy by the south Bombay wing of the BJP to highlight the importance of the national anthem and exemplified how a Hindi film could be exploited to serve jingoistic nationalism, smacking of opportunism. BJP activists demonstrated outside a cinema hall which had been screening the aforementioned film for seven weeks prior to the sudden nationalistic awareness, appealing to the public to stand up when the anthem was played during the film. The

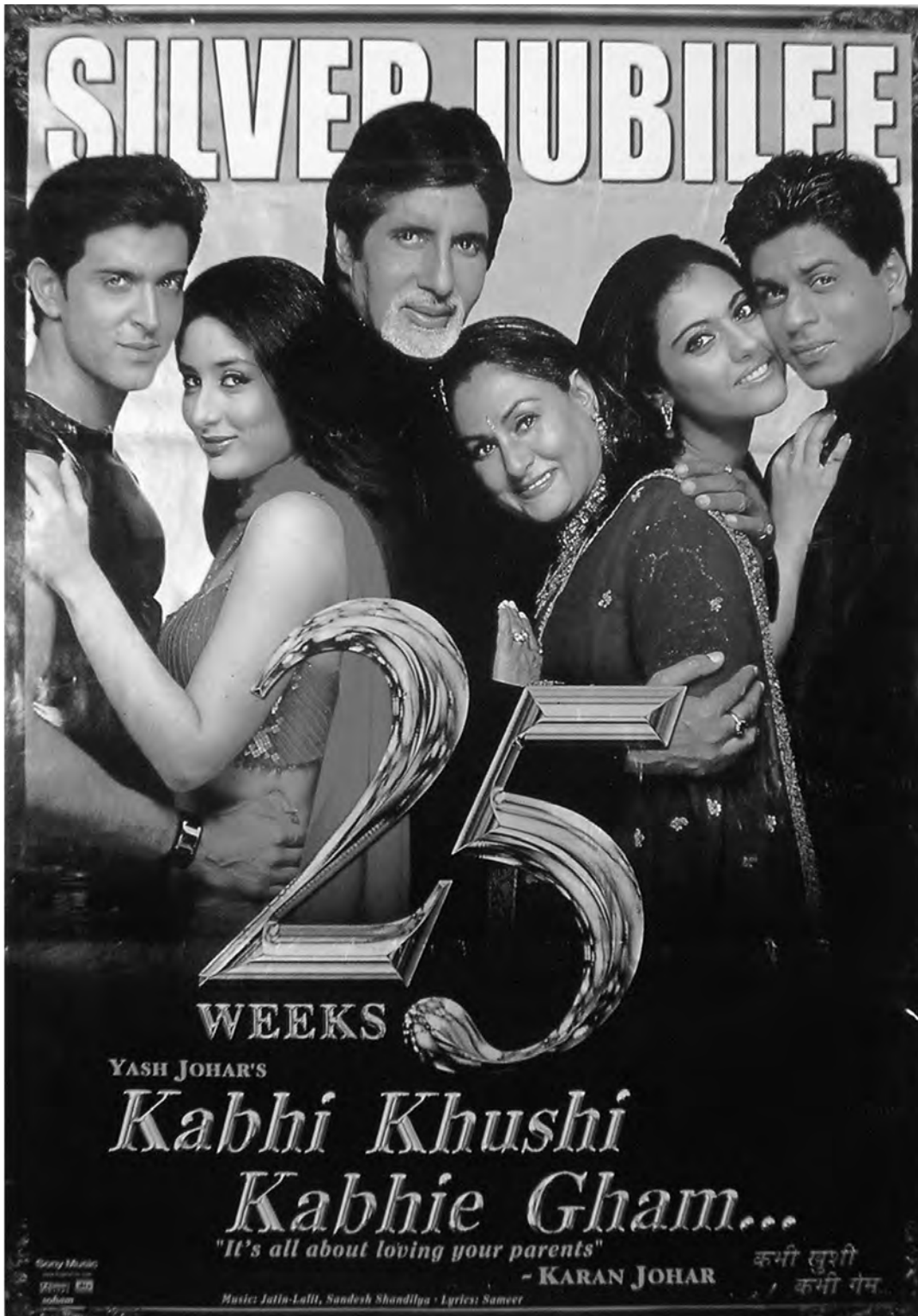

Figure 1: Courtesy of *The National Film Archive of India, Pune.*

BJP leader Sanjay Bedia opined that the national flag and anthem were a matter of pride for every countryman – 'everyone claims that he or she is a patriot, so the least they can do is stand in honour of the national anthem when it is played' ('BJP uses "K3G" to bring in respect for anthem', 2002). When asked why the party was reacting ten months after the film was released, Mr. Bedia said, 'our appeal is not restricted to one particular movie. Since "K3G" happens to play the anthem, we want to make a beginning here' ('BJP uses "K3G" to bring in respect for anthem', 2002). It should be mentioned that this practice continues till the present time and it is only in Bombay cinema halls that the national anthem is played to an almost mandatory standing audience.

Besides targeting theatrical exhibition, the BJP and the Shiv Sena used the catchy tunes and lyrics of popular Bollywood songs to attack leaders of opposition parties such as Sonia Gandhi, releasing poll-publicity audio cassettes featuring these chartbusters (Kulkarni-Apte: 1998a).

Other Discriminatory, regulatory interventions

The State sought to regulate film production not only through film financing, but also through official and unofficial measures such as free screening of Hindu nationalist films, entertainment tax exemptions and national film awards which aimed to define and promote, what, according to the BJP, was 'good cinema.'

Certain films that promoted Hindu nationalist discourse, or were based on the lives of Hindu ideologues like Veer Savarkar, were given state benefits and screened for free. In 2001 *The Times of India* reported that:

> nearly one lakh school children from slums and municipal schools (would) be shown the Hindi film *Veer Savarkar* free of cost with the help of a private foundation in Bombay … with a view to *inculcating patriotism and nationalism among children* [added emphasis].
>
> ('"Veer Savarkar" to be screened free for school, slum children', 2001)

Partisan tax concessions

In 1996 *The Times of India* reported that special favours had been granted to three films *Hindustani*/Indian (1996), *Prem Granth*/India (1996) and *Agni-Saakshi* (1996), the latter produced by Bal Thackeray's son. According to the report, the BJP leader Pramod Mahajan had urged the government to exempt *Hindustani* from entertainment tax as he was 'impressed by its "tight-plot" woven round the theme of corruption and its debilitating effect on the country's public life' ('Mahajan for tax exemption', 1996). Mr. Mahajan felt that Kamal Hassan's role of a septuagenarian freedom fighter-turned crusader would help generate greater awareness on the issue of corruption. Significantly, a senior functionary of the Maharashtra BJP observed that, 'the film echoe[d] the BJP's pet theme of criminalization of politics. Being a popular film with a strong visual appeal, *Hindustani* [could] *drive home the party's viewpoint*' [added emphasis] ('Mahajan for tax exemption' 1996). Reportedly, Mahajan had also written to the state governments of New Delhi, Gujarat, Harayana and Rajastan recommending that the film be exempted from entertainment tax in the aforementioned BJP-ruled states. Inquiries revealed that Mahajan's recommendations were

most likely to be accepted by the ruling BJP-Shiv Sena government, which seemed quite willing to forsake its hefty share of revenue accrued by the tax in favour of party propaganda through the medium of a film that espoused its nationalist agenda ('Mahajan for tax exemption', 1996). According to a prominent exhibitor, the 'higher the tickets rates, the more the government recover through entertainment tax. It would have recovered more had it not allowed films like *Agni-Saakshi*, *Prem-Granth*, *Masoom* (1996) to be tax free' ('City theatres to close on Sept 13', 1996).

Significantly, the state government's decision to exempt *Prem-Granth* and *Agni-Saakshi* from the entertainment tax had incurred the wrath of the opposition parties in the two houses of state legislature ('Mahajan for tax exemption', 1996). Poet and film-maker Ramdas Phutane, a member of the legislative council, accused the ruling Sena-BJP government of bestowing special favours on the aforementioned films. In a statement to *The Times of India* he expressed his displeasure: 'the booming guns may be the director's idea of love and amity, but *Agni-Saakshi* does in no way merit tax-exemption' ('Mahajan for tax exemption' 1996). That such a film had found favour with the state government was not surprising since the producer was the late Bindumadhav Thackeray, son of the Shiv Sena chief, Bal Thackeray. According to a veteran Bollywood watcher, 'what (was) deeply distressing (was) that the Sena-BJP government seem(ed) to be applying its own rules to favour film-makers and banners of its choice' ('Mahajan for tax exemption' 1996).

State Awards: The National Film Award controversy

Mehta has suggested that through national awards the state plays a crucial role in producing genres through official patronage. National awards are official stamps of approval that encourage producers to churn out ideologically similar fare. As Pendakur observes, 'the government's role in India's cinema is clearly that of the patron and the police. One cannot help notice how close it is to a feudal overlord who patronizes art and, at the same time, sets serious limits to it' (Pendakur 2003: 84). The State ceremonially endorsed big-budget, family films such as *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*/*The Brave-Hearted Will Take Away The Bride* (1995), a phenomenal box-office hit particularly with the diasporic audiences in the US and UK, for providing 'wholesome entertainment' and 'as a national award winner … also granted the privilege of being *tax-free*' [original emphasis] (Mehta 2005: 145). Since state awards are quite often incentives to reward filmmakers for maintaining the status quo and/or promoting partisan politics it wasn't wholly unexpected that instances of politicization occurred. There is, of course, a long history of state patronage, which, according to Pendakur 'works in subtle ways to reinforce the power of the state as the ultimate arbiter of taste, morality, and the boundaries of political discourse in Indian cinema' (2003: 84).

In 2001, controversy broke out over the decision taken by an allegedly 'government-backed partisan jury rather than an independent body' ('Jury's Out', First Edit 2001) to award the National Film Awards for best actress and actor to Raveena Tandon and Anil Kapoor for their roles in *Daman*: *A Victim of Marital Violence* (2001) and *Pukar* (2000) respectively. Coincidentally, Lajmi's partner, the music director Bhupen Hazarika, was

awarded the prestigious Phalke award by the government, a recognition that Rao believes was politically motivated and totally undeserving.[22] Condemning this politicisation of the award-giving process, a *The Times Of India* editorial decried:

> for cinema's sake, let's leave cinema alone. What's politics got to do with it, anyway? Why should a film win an award simply because it … propagates Indianness, features artistes who campaign for the ruling party or features the nation's number one enemy … More importantly why should a specialist body like a film jury comprise non-specialists like campaign managers, dance teachers, political *netas*[23] and friends of *netas*? … Any political party – be it the BJP or the Congress – should clearly demarcate its field of activity, which obviously is the political arena alone. … Hard-core ideological intonations have led to the asphyxiation of many an autonomous body, transforming art and intellect into shallow propaganda.
>
> ('Jury's Out', First Edit 2001)

Reacting to the charges of intervention in these awards, Swaraj denied that there had been any attempt to compromise the independence of the jury and claimed that at no point had her ministry sought any lists of films or tried to influence the jury, the members having been cleared by her without allegedly going into their political leanings. However she did concede that 'four of the members could be described as pro-BJP' ('Sushma denies intervention charge in film awards' 2001).

Conclusion

More than any other political party in India, the BJP and its allies were aware of the importance of the film industry and recognised its growth potential, particularly with the Indian diaspora in the US, Canada, UK and Middle East. The BJP had recognized the power of the cinematic apparatus as a cheap mass medium that reached the common man.[24] It used the industry as a conduit for various purposes, not least for party propaganda and for the dissemination of nationalist ideology to illiterate masses, for whom the moving image rather than the written word was the effective means of communication.

The changing dynamics between the BJP-led Indian State and the Bombay film industry post-1998 could be retrospectively traced to the early 1990s when the BJP had developed various strategies to involve itself in the workings of the film industry, not least by infiltrating the trade unions. Industry status, along with all its benefits, provided the State with a means of regulating a hitherto unorganized and amorphous business sector by its fiscal policies on investment, the Intellectual Property Right and also by giving positive incentives (such as national awards) to make its patronage and pleasure known. Recognition of the film industry could also be seen as a means of controlling content in ways more subterranean, more effective, and less public than through the censorship battles of the 1990s. As Manjunath Pendakur observes, 'investors usually attempt to influence the content of the films' (Pendakur 2003: 54). For Mehta, 'the process of constructing and then policing corruption produce(d) another opportunity for the state to "act and to (re)inscribe its authority' in the context of globalization (Mehta 2005: 140).

22. Email correspondence with Maithili Rao, 6 June, 2008.

23. Meaning 'Leader' in Hindi.

24. Telephone interview with Sri Gagendra Chauhan, National Convenor of the Cultural Cell of BJP, Mumbai, October 2007.

This new relationship between Bombay cinema and the Indian state was illuminated by a quip made by the Finance Minister after granting the film industry a series of concessions: 'I hope these concessions combined with what I have already done on the indirect tax side will reassure the entertainment industry that *Hum Saath Saath Hain*/We Are United (1999)'[25] (Quoted in Mehta 2005: 149). His use of the title of a big-budget Bombay 'family' film to characterize the changing relationship between Bombay cinema and the Indian state was not in jest but an insightful remark about the twin goals of the BJP, namely, to globalize in an uniquely Indian way, whilst attesting to the patriarchal alliance between the State and Bombay cinema (Mehta 2005: 149).

25. Released in 1999 and produced under the banner of the traditionally conservative Rajshri Productions.

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Hong Kong New Wave Cinema (1978–2000)

By Pak Tong Cheuk

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The critically acclaimed and popular Hong Kong 'New Wave' played a historically, economically and culturally significant role in Hong Kong and China's cinema industries. *Hong Kong New Wave Cinema* presents a comprehensive theoretical analysis of the movement, focusing on its historical context, style, and directors.

Cheuk engages with the aesthetic of 'New Wave', exploring narrative content, structure and mise-en-scène to offer a thorough understanding of the genre. Additionally, Cheuk discusses the directors, analysing trends in their education and providing valuable insight into the directors' reccurring themes – oppositions between East and West, rich and poor, and concerns with identity in Hong Kong. *Hong Kong New Wave Cinema* offers comprehensive coverage of the 'New Wave', contextualising the cinema and explaining its effects worldwide.

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Melbourne, Indian Popular Cinema and the Marketing of 'An Enviable Cosmopolitan Lifestyle'

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Abstract

Melbourne, like other cities that aspire to a global status, has attempted to enlist Indian popular film as a means of attracting Indian investment, business migration, tourism and international students. Key to understanding the representation of the global city in Indian popular cinema is the much-marketed concept of the cosmopolitan lifestyle, and Melbourne's distinctive trams are used strategically to link consumerism with an urban lifestyle. Nonetheless, we need to look beyond the shopping malls to the other corporate spaces of what Saskia Sassen terms 'the glamour zone', to the offices, hotels and apartment blocks, if we are to understand how multinational corporations not only use Indian popular cinema to promote their corporate brand but also work with government agencies to promote city brands which aspire to resemble New York or London. By viewing Indian popular cinema through its representation of Melbourne as a global city, contradictions within the apparent embrace of globalization by Indian popular cinema are thrown into relief.

Keywords

Melbourne
Indian popular cinema
global city
cosmopolitanism
trams

Introduction

In this paper I want to consider the image of the global city in Indian popular cinema. According to Saskia Sassen, who wrote the influential study, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (1991; 2001), the global economy is managed and coordinated by key multinational businesses operating through a cross-border network of global cities. These cities not only house the multinationals but provide the institutional, financial and technological infrastructures which facilitate a transnational market economy. Sassen identifies the top five global cities as London, New York, Tokyo, Paris and Frankfurt (Rodrigues 2003), and of these, London and New York are by far the most popular overseas cities appearing in Indian cinema. In 2007, for example, London appeared in at least fourteen Hindi films, providing the main setting for the big name productions *Cheeni Kum*, *Namastey London* and *Jhoom Barabar Jhoom*.

In this paper, however, rather than look at London or New York, I want to investigate the image of the global city in Indian cinema in terms of Melbourne, the capital of the Australian State of Victoria. Melbourne has appeared in both Hindi and Tamil movies, from minor appearances as an exotic backdrop for fantasy song sequences in *Koi Aap Sa* and *Pokkiri*, to major appearances as an education destination in *Salaam Namaste*, a sporting

destination in *Chak De! India*, a vacation destination in *Thiruttu Payale* and an employment destination in *Nala Damayanthi* and *Unnale Unnale*. I choose Melbourne partly because, aside from London, it is the most familiar to me of the overseas cities that appear regularly in Indian films. But I also choose Melbourne because it aspires to be, rather than is, a global centre of finance and business. Unlike London, Melbourne is not in Sassen's first rank of global cities, and in a 2008 survey of the world's best financial and commercial cities, Melbourne appeared 41st on the list, with London top (Anon. 2008a). And unlike Sydney, which Sassen includes among eleven second-rank cities (Rodrigues 2003) and which appeared twelfth in the 2008 survey, Melbourne contains no internationally recognized icons matching the status of Sydney's Opera House, Harbour Bridge and Bondi beach. Melbourne's tourism, investment and film commissions, therefore, have to be more blatant in marketing Melbourne as a global city; and they have to do so not only by making the city look like London or New York but also by making it not look like Sydney, a city with which Melbourne has been competing since the 1850s. Witness a typical recent comment in Sydney's *Sunday Telegraph*: 'Sydney has suffered the ultimate indignity: being replaced by Melbourne in a list of the world's 10 most liveable cities' (Miranda 2008: 18).

Melbourne's need to appear distinctive while aspiring to look like New York or London is one of the contradictions of capitalism that Marxist cultural theorists, such as Stuart Hall, noted many years ago. As Hall wrote in 1991, modern capitalism was producing a new cultural terrain: 'not the unity of the singular corporate enterprise which tries to encapsulate the entire world within its confines, but much more decentralised and decentred forms of social and economic organization' (Hall 1991: 30). Global capitalism does not require everywhere to look the same, or as Hall himself put it: 'To be at the leading edge of modern capitalism is to eat fifteen different cuisines in any one week, not to eat one' (Hall 1991: 31).

It is this acknowledgement of the role of difference in globalization that makes me uneasy with aspects of the argument of Jyotsna Kapur and Manjunath Pendakur in their recent article, 'The Strange Disappearance of Bombay from its Own Cinema'. Kapur and Pendakur trace the ways in which, as a result of the liberalization of the Indian economy in the 1990s and its integration into a global economy, the public spaces of Mumbai gradually disappeared from Hindi popular cinema during the 1990s:

> these 90s films redefined the nature of the city itself – homogenizing cities as spaces of consumption rather than the production of goods, services, or political associations. The streets of Bombay were turned into an assortment of landscape and tourist spots, malls, neon signs, and global brand names making Bombay undifferentiated from any other city.
>
> (Kapur and Pendakur 2007: 46–47)

The futuristic Mumbai of *Love Story 2050* bears out this tendency for global capitalism to erase the distinct cultural and physical characteristics of cities. But we need to bear in mind Hall's point that globalization does not lead to a single cuisine, and Melbourne's attempts to use its distinctive tramways to appear both like and unlike Sydney, for example, suggest that global capital has a logic that requires a level of differentiation between cities.

The global city envisaged by Kapur and Pendakur as a space of consumption intersects with what Sassen refers to as the 'glamour zones' of the global city, summarized by Sumana Ramanan as: 'hubs of "super-profits" that boast state-of-the-art office buildings, luxury hotels, up-market shopping complexes and fancy apartment blocks that house the "hyper-urban professionals" of the global economy' (Ramanan 2007). Yet while up-market shopping malls are central to the representation of the global city in Indian cinema, we need to relate spaces of consumption to the broader lifestyle of the 'hyper-urban' professionals who inhabit those spaces; and the glamour of up-market shopping complexes in Melbourne, London or New York is dependent on the fantasy of a global lifestyle. In other words, what we see in representations of Melbourne in Indian movies is the central business district (CBD) as a glamour zone, a place where Indian urban professionals not only shop, but work, sleep, eat, drink and, especially, dance. Key to understanding the representation of the global city in Indian cinema is the much-marketed concept of the cosmopolitan lifestyle.

Relating the offices, shops and nightclubs that are now commonplace in Indian cinema to the global city's glamour zone prompts us to search for other traces of those multinational corporations that the glamour zone services. And what we see in the case of Melbourne is that the multinationals are keen not only to use Indian cinema to promote their corporate brand through sponsorship, but also to be associated with city branding. Far from supporting a transnational homogeneity, the multinationals work with government agencies in promoting the distinctiveness of the city. Moreover, by promoting a particular city, global corporations necessarily become enmeshed in local history; as Sassen puts it, her focus on global cities 'anchors various features of globalization in the specific conditions and histories of these cities and in their variable insertions in their national economies and in various world economies across time and space' (Sassen 2002: 9).

As an overseas location, Melbourne's relationship to Indian popular cinema is doubly decentred. It is decentred in terms of a geography of centre and periphery, and while on the one hand, Melbourne is evidently a Western or First World city, on the other hand, Melbourne is subjected to a globalizing Indian cinema; as the 'globalized' Indian film director, Shekhar Kapur, was reported as saying on the release of *Krrish* in 2006: 'I see the new wave of filmmaking coming from the East. The new megastars will not be "western" but probably Chinese or Indian. There will be reverse cultural colonisation' (Anon. 2006b). Melbourne is, therefore, both an exploiter of, yet exploited by, Indian popular cinema. And secondly, Melbourne's relationship to Indian popular cinema is decentred in terms of its aspiration to global city status and its relationship to top rank global cities like London and New York. Headlines such as 'From Mumbai to Melbourne' (Arora 2005) demonstrate how the arrival of an Indian film crew is itself regarded as proof of Melbourne's international status, much as the arrival of Hollywood or British movie stars were in the 1950s. By looking at Indian cinema not only from Australia but also through its representation of Melbourne as a global city, contradictions within the apparent embrace of globalization by Indian popular cinema are thrown into relief.

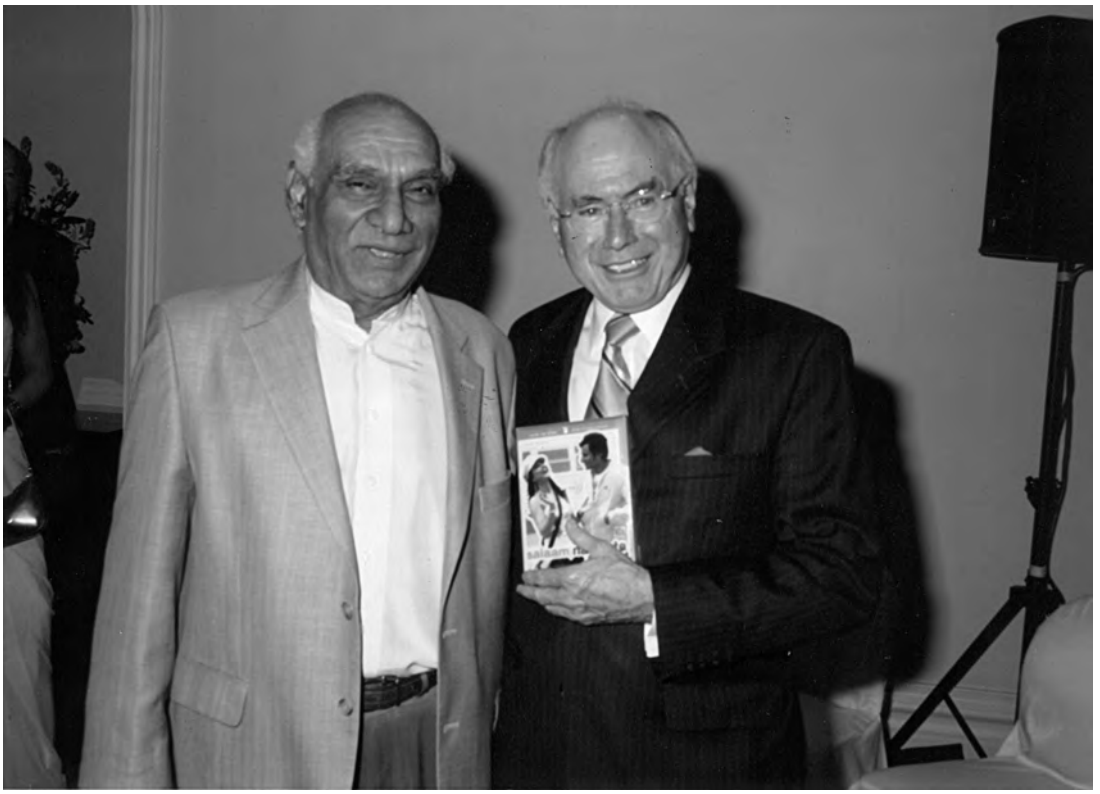

Figure 1: 'Mr Yash Chopra with Australian Prime Minister John Howard. Image courtesy Yash Raj Films Pvt. Ltd.'

The Melbourne tram in Indian popular cinema

In March 2006, the then Australian Prime Minister, John Howard, met with the veteran Indian film-maker, Yash Chopra, at a business luncheon in Mumbai during a trade mission to India and was photographed being presented with a DVD of *Salaam Namaste*, a film set in and around Melbourne. The production of Indian films within Australia is economically insignificant compared with US production, and while *Salaam Namaste*'s reported budget of A$3.3 million (US$2.5 million) was large by Indian standards (Ziffer 2006: 11), it was minute compared with the estimated budget for the US production, *Ghost Rider*, of A$119 million (US$110 million) which also filmed in and around Melbourne (Box Office Mojo n.d.). With budgets too small to qualify for State and Federal film production incentives, Indian film production is important to Australia not for its contribution to either the Australian film industry or the local economy, but for its capacity to showcase Australia in India. Australia is by no means the leading player in using Indian cinema as a showcase, and is competing with a long list of players which includes the UK, the USA, Canada, South Africa, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Thailand. John Howard's meeting with Yash Chopra endorsed the use of Indian popular film as a means of attracting Indian investment, business migration, tourism and international students.

Australian governments at all levels, from the Federal government down through the state governments to the city councils, are active in appealing to the growing Indian middle classes who can now afford to send their children overseas for education and who themselves travel overseas for holidays and in search of business or career opportunities. In the financial year 2006–7, the international education sector contributed A$3,545 million (US$3,162 million) to the economy of Melbourne and the State of Victoria, with students from India accounting for 25 per cent of international enrolments, overtaking China as the largest group by nationality (Victorian Government 2008b). In such circumstances, it is not surprising that the State of South Australia recently offered an incentive of a reported A$150,000 (US$134,000) to the producers of *Love Story 2050* to film in South Australia (Anon. 2006a). The State Premier, Mike Rann, was enthusiastic about the film's potential to promote South Australia within India: 'Placement of our State in mainstream entertainment, such as this movie, is a great way of increasing our profile among an increasingly affluent and mobile audience of many millions of people' (South Australian Tourism Commission 2006). Australian cities seek to attract business people, tourists and international students by marketing distinctive images they expect will be attractive to 'affluent' and 'mobile' Indians.

Melbourne's trams are a distinctive feature of the city when compared with Sydney, Adelaide and Brisbane, each of which progressively dismantled its tram network during the 1950s and 1960s, and a Melbourne tram appears on the DVD cover of *Salaam Namaste* which John Howard obligingly held up for the photographers in Mumbai in 2006. The DVD cover features a publicity still of its two stars against a background of a Melbourne tram, and while tram travel itself does not feature in *Salaam Namaste*, trams abound in the 'picturization' (or visual realization) of the key song 'My *Dil* Goes Mmmm' at the point in the movie where Ambar and Nick discover their love for each other and Ambar becomes pregnant. We need to be careful not to read too much into such images and it would, admittedly, be difficult to film in the centre of Melbourne without a tram appearing in the background, though both *Koi Aap Sa* and *Pokkiri* proved it could be done by filming tramless, fantasy-song sequences on the banks of the River Yarra. Nonetheless, trams glide through most of the scenes set in Melbourne's CBD in *Salaam Namaste*, and the picturization of 'My *Dil* Goes Mmmm' confirms the film as a celebration of yuppie urban living, with Melbourne a city of beach houses, high-rise apartments, the Crown Casino complex, high-class restaurants and fashionable night clubs.

With the exception of the 'heritage' W class tram that appears in *Soldier*, Melbourne's trams appear in Indian films as visual markers of a yuppie urban way of life. The tram on the DVD cover of *Salaam Namaste* is paralleled in a publicity still for *Unnale Unnale*, a Tamil movie partly shot in Melbourne, which similarly poses the film's stars against a Melbourne tram. In *Unnale Unnale*, trams appear in the energetic opening sequence, with Melbourne's street life and tower blocks illustrating the opening voiceover (in the English subtitles): 'World is big. Big busy cities … Big buildings … Life changes every minute'. Trams also appear in two songs set in Melbourne's CBD, 'Hello Miss *Imsaiyae*' and the

romantic '*Mudhal Naal*', songs which like 'My *Dil* Goes Mmmm' in *Salaam Namaste*, reinforce an association between trams and vibrant city living through shots of tower blocks, pedestrianized shopping areas, modern public sculpture and outdoor cafés, an association promoted worldwide by the (re)introduction of state-of-the-art trams in inner-city regeneration schemes.

Yet the case of Melbourne also demonstrates how aspiring global cities try to combine globalization with local distinctiveness. Melbourne's embrace of economic neo-liberalism in the 1990s under the government of Victorian State Premier, Jeff Kennett, resulted in a mix of inner-city commercial redevelopment, such as the Crown Casino complex, and public works such as the new Melbourne Museum. Melbourne's tramways are a good example of how neo-liberalism worked alongside and through revived city patriotism, and Melbourne's modern European-built trams were first introduced following the sale of the public transport network to private investors in the late 1990s. In 2004, Yarra Trams, which is partly owned by the French multinational Transdev, acquired control of the whole tram network and relaunched it using 'the new positioning statement ["]Melbourne all over["] which accurately describes the tram's global identity as an iconic and enduring symbol of Melbourne' (Anon 2004). Yarra Trams, named after the river on which Melbourne was founded, have successfully retained and traded on the tram's long-standing association with Melbourne.

The use of trams to promote positive attitudes towards Melbourne is probably the most easily managed aspect of Tourism Victoria's branding strategy for Melbourne, a strategy pursued through the assistance packages offered to Indian film productions, the most recent of which is *Main aur Mrs Khanna* which filmed in Melbourne in May and June 2008:

> Being featured in Bollywood films is a great opportunity to build brand awareness of Melbourne and Victoria in India, which is one of our fastest growing inbound tourism markets … Tourism Victoria, in partnership with Melbourne Airport, has negotiated for a range of prominent Melbourne and regional destinations to be featured in the film alongside its all-star cast.
>
> (Anon. 2008b)

Yet although we can talk in terms of Brand Melbourne and 'brand awareness' as though it were merely a matter of offering to film-makers and film audiences a pre-existing product, the truth is that what is being offered to film-makers has to match the image they wish to create and which they anticipate will meet audience demand. Differentiation between cities and the choice to shoot in, say, either Melbourne, Sydney or London becomes relevant only after a target market, and the types of image needed to satisfy that market, have been identified. It is no use going to the expense of filming Brett Lee in the Melbourne Cricket Ground, as in the forthcoming *Victory*, if one's audience is American and has never heard Brett Lee singing with the legendary playback singer, Asha Bhosle. As Gary Morgan, a market researcher, has said of Brand Melbourne: 'Ultimately, the measure of success is not simply an increase in visitors, but an increase in the right visitors with the right value contribution' (Morgan

2004: 17). Or to put it another way, collaboration between Indian film-producers and Tourism Victoria to present Melbourne as a global city depends on an affluent and mobile target audience already predisposed towards the image of the global city.

Melbourne and lifestyle marketing in Indian popular cinema

In her discussion of the cultural consumerism of Indo-chic, Saadia Toor has shown how the development of India as an emerging globalized market has produced in India a new young urban class: 'This class of young professionals is very different from the generic Indian middle class because it is a new phenomenon (definitely a product of liberalization), both demographically young and urban in location, self-consciously cosmopolitan in orientation' (Toor 2000: 4). Toor is insistent that not only is this a new social class with a new cultural identity, but also that the newly developed globalized consumer culture in India is the province of the young professional rather than 'the generic "middle class" which researchers on modern India are so fond of evoking' (Toor 2000: 4). Toor's emphasis on youth is supported by recent Indian films set in Australia, the UK and the USA, whose heroes and heroines belong, to varying degrees, to Toor's class of young professionals. In *Salaam Namaste*, for example, Ambar is studying medicine, while Nick is both a head chef and a qualified architect; and in *Unnale Unnale*, Karthik (Vinay) is a construction engineer sent to Australia for six months by his employer, while Deepika (Tanisha) is brought to Australia as an assistant to Jhansi (Sada), a corporate businesswoman in a love triangle with Karthik and Jhansi.

The 'glamour zones', to use Sassen's phrase, which these young heroes and heroines of new Hindi cinema occupy are internationalized corporate spaces: they work in offices with extensive cityscapes, they sleep in five-star hotels and designer apartments, and they spend their leisure time in exclusive shopping malls, bars, restaurants and nightclubs. These non-specific international spaces are both lifestyle and corporate spaces, reflecting both the hero's financial worth and their particular corporate mindset, as described by Pheng Cheah: 'The cosmopolitanism of corporate workers is essentially the cosmopolitanism of a new technocratic professional class whose primary aims in life are making a profit and conspicuous consumption' (Cheah 2006: 492). And to the degree that this yuppie corporate class provides a growing proportion of box-office revenues by paying either overseas ticket prices or the higher ticket prices of India's new metropolitan multiplex cinemas, then, according to Sudhanva Deshpande, it is increasingly their aspirations that Hindi films seek to fulfil: 'It is not the poor, then, but the globalized rich who, for the most part, create the profits for commercial Hindi cinema. The projection of their fantasies has produced a new kind of hero' (Deshpande 2005: 197). And, according to Deshpande, a major feature of their fantasies is a consumerism centred on the hero's body:

> he dances like a dream, and his body itself, rather than his persona, is the object of consumption, much to the delight of the advertising world. It is only fitting, then, that this new, consumable hero wears Gap shirts and Nike sneakers, and when he dances, it is in front of McDonald's outlets in white

> man's land, or Hollywood studios, or swanky trains, and has white girls – not Indian peasants – dancing with him.
>
> (Deshpande 2005: 197)

For those in the advertising world surveying the burgeoning number of affluent Indian middle-class consumers, an image of Shah Rukh Khan in a Gap shirt and Nike sneakers dancing in front of a McDonald's outlet is very likely to prove as seductive a fantasy as they hope it will prove to the 'globalized rich' among the cinema audiences.

In *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*, Shah Rukh Khan wears a Gap shirt when he dances with Kajol and Rani Mukherji in and around Eilean Donan Castle in Scotland, and this can be read in terms of the fantasy song sequences of earlier films. In films like *Sangam* and *An Evening in Paris*, the lovers are seen in similarly romantic overseas locations, in cities, such as Rome and Paris, or against natural scenery, such as Niagara Falls. However, following the increase in Indian tourism to Switzerland as a result of Yash Chopra's films of the later 1980s and early 1990s, other destinations, such as New Zealand and Scotland, have courted Indian film-makers in order to exploit the developing Indian honeymoon and film tourism markets (Pyke 2001). The use of Eilean Donan Castle in *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* and in the Tamil movie *Kandukondain Kandukondain* is the result of the development of that 'increasingly affluent and mobile audience' to which Mike Rann referred and which is signalled by Shah Rukh Khan's Gap shirt.

The Gap shirt is as much a symbol of an affluent and mobile lifestyle as the high rise offices, shops, restaurants and designer apartments of Melbourne's CBD that appear in fantasy song sequences in *Koi Aap Sa* and *Pokkiri*. The fantasy on offer is no longer of an ideal or unattainable world but of a real world into which one can buy if one has the money, and to this extent it fulfils the aim of lifestyle marketing:

> In a nutshell, lifestyle marketing means that you're selling a lifestyle as much as you're selling a product, in contrast to traditional, old-school marketing that's all about the product … aspiration is part of lifestyle marketing, but it's more than that. Lifestyle marketing isn't just painting a picture of some ideal world for consumers to buy into (although that's definitely part of it). It's a two-way communication, where acknowledging the consumer is just an [*sic*] important.
>
> (McKenty 2006)

Finn McKenty, a US marketing designer, cites Starbucks as an example: 'Starbucks doesn't sell coffee, they sell an experience. It's not about the coffee, it's about the music, the graphics on the walls, the fixtures, and even the evocative names of their sizes (tall, grande, and venti are way sexier than small, medium and large)' (McKenty 2006). Global cities market lifestyle as much as place; as the *Brand Victoria Resource Book* puts it: 'In today's world people are searching for cosmopolitan centres like Melbourne which offer lifestyle, security and room to be an individual without judgment or fear' (Victorian Government n.d.: 1.02).

The lifestyle of the global city depends, of course, on affluence, and Asha Kasebekar sees *Dil Chahta Hai*, part of which was set in Sydney, as

marking the emergence in Indian cinema of an urban, consumerist lifestyle:

> What *Dil Chahta Hai* did was to break free from the rural viewers by concentrating on the urban audiences. It was a film about love – for women, for cars, for consumer goods. And it actively promoted a lifestyle not available to the rural areas.
>
> (Kasebekar 2006: 202)

Salaam Namaste can be regarded as a successor to *Dil Chahta Hai*, and the first six minutes contain brand placements of lifestyle products: Nick receiving a degree from La Trobe University; a Pepsi vending machine in the Salaam Namaste radio studio; and Nick driving his Smart Fortwo town car. It is true that Ambar mocks Nikhil for calling himself Nick and that Nick has to grow emotionally beyond the superficiality of a consumerist lifestyle, yet the film promotes conspicuous consumption throughout.

On the basis of movies shot in Melbourne, Tamil films seem to attract less product placements. In *Nala Damayanthi*, which was filmed mainly in Melbourne, a passing tram carries the advertising slogan for a brand of toilet tissue, 'Everyone has a soft spot for Sorbent', and in *Thiruttu Payale*, which has a 40-minute section set in Melbourne, an advertisement for Jayco, an Australian manufacturer of camper trailers, caravans and motor homes, makes a brief, if incongruous, appearance in a scene in a gym. As Yang and Roskos-Ewoldsen have shown, in terms of film audiences noticing brands, advertisements displayed in the background like the Jayco logo are less effective than products integrated into the narrative and used by the main characters (Yang and Roskos-Ewoldsen 2007: 482); or as Coonoor Kripalani puts it, 'if the stars were naturally to sit down at a Starbucks and order a frappuucino [*sic*] in an identifiable way, it would impact more than just showing a Starbucks in the background' (Kripalani 2006: 203). This is another example of Starbucks' lifestyle marketing and notwithstanding the two Bacardis ordered by Karthik in a Melbourne nightclub in *Unnale Unnale*, integrated lifestyle product placements seem more likely to appear in Hindi films. In *Nala Damayanthi*, the Crown Casino is simply pointed to by the cabbie bringing Ramji into the CBD from Melbourne airport, yet in *Salaam Namaste*, Ambar and Nick enter Melbourne's Crown Casino complex late one night to satisfy Ambar's craving for Ben & Jerry's dark Belgian chocolate ice cream.

Integrated lifestyle product placements in a film apparently correlate with the degree to which its hero and heroine belong to Cheah's 'new technocratic professional class whose primary aims in life are making a profit and conspicuous consumption' (Cheah 2006). Yet lifestyle marketing also needs to be related to the sector of the audience for whom these films were made and, again to take the case of Starbucks, though in *Kal Ho Naa Ho* Jasprit 'Sweetu' Kapoor (Delnaaz Paul) orders two chocolate Frappaccinos in New York 'in an identifiable way', Starbucks has to date failed to get clearance to open retail stores in India (Rajghatta 2007). Nick's Smart car in *Salaam Namaste* is similarly not marketed in India, and the target market for advertisers in *Kal Ho Naa Ho* and *Salaam Namaste* appears, therefore, to be a youthful, affluent diasporic audience.

Kasebekar's point about *Dil Chahta Hai* breaking free from rural viewers is relevant here, and Shakuntala Rao's interviews with subjects in Patiala in Punjab reveal how the lives of NRI yuppies portrayed in Hindi cinema can alienate non-elite, rural Indian audiences. As one interviewee put it:

> Maybe some Indians like those from IIT [Indian Institute of Technology, an elite engineering school] are living like Shahrukh Khan's [character] in *Swades*, driving that car, living in that house, or working for NASA, but my sister is not living like that. She works as a janitor at the New Jersey airport.
>
> (Rao 2007: 68)

The reality of the lives of non-elite NRIs is not entirely absent from Indian cinema, and in *Hattrick*, Hemu Patel (Paresh Rawal) is a cleaner at London airport who masks his lowly status from his neighbours by pretending to be a customs officer. But Hemu Patel's story is only one of three that the movie follows, and non-elite heroes are rare in recent Hindi cinema. The reverse seems to be the case not only for Tamil movies set overseas but also for other non-Hindi Indian cinemas, which appear directed less towards NRI or metropolitan audiences than towards rural and more geographically restricted audiences. As another of Rao's interviewees commented: 'Only Punjabi films show what NRIs are really doing[,] like working in gas stations or working in a restaurant like in *Des Hoya*[*a*] *Pardes*. Hindi films don't show how Indians abroad are living' (Rao 2007: 68).

And yet such a lifestyle is visually and imaginatively attractive, as demonstrated by the migration of South Asians to those same cities that are showcased in Indian cinema. The resentment and alienation from Hindi cinema Rao identifies among less affluent, non-metropolitan audiences may be due, therefore, not so much to a rejection of the lifestyle on offer, as to a failure to live out the urban lifestyle being marketed. In this sense, the dissatisfaction expressed is perhaps more a disappointment with the false promises of lifestyle advertising than a rejection of images of Preity Zinta and Saif Ali Khan dancing in front of a Melbourne tram or the Crown Casino.

Cosmopolitan Melbourne in Indian popular cinema

In her study of film-induced tourism, Sue Beeton notes that, 'Places have become products that must be strategically designed and marketed, and those that fail face the risk of economic decline' (Beeton 2005: 43). The projection of urban Australia in Indian films is as much the creation of lifestyle advertising as Saif Ali Khan's Smart car, and in this sense, the first product placement in *Salaam Namaste* is Melbourne itself, the name appearing across an aerial shot of the CBD one minute into the movie. Lalitha Gopalan has noted how song picturizations in particular are related to both tourism and consumerism: 'Not unlike the commercial imperative towards product placement in contemporary American cinema, song and dance sequences draw in a whole host of adjacent economies such as tourism and consumerism that are not so easily compartmentalized in Indian cinema' (Gopalan 2002: 19). In *Salaam Namaste*, therefore, it is difficult to know whether an appearance of the Crown Casino complex is marketing the casino as a commercial enterprise or as

a Melbourne attraction; and when Preity Zinta dances on Melbourne's stylish Webb Bridge wearing a skirt displaying the name of Billabong sports and casual wear, tourism and conspicuous consumption, mobility and affluence, merge in the promotion of a globalized urban lifestyle. Where a city is one of the products being promoted, Deshpande's 'consumable hero' wearing Gap shirts and Nike sneakers might equally be filmed dancing in front of the Crown Casino as in front of a McDonald's outlet; and if the designer clothes should sport a brand name like Billabong which is associated with Australia, then the dividing line between destination marketing and consumer product placement is erased completely.

The use of Melbourne in Indian popular cinema, like the use of Sydney, London, New York or Bangkok, is primarily an issue of visual style than narrative motivation. Tourism advertising depends more on the photographic image than on accompanying text, and Melbourne's CBD offers what the Victorian State Government, through its trade, tourism and film commissions, terms a cosmopolitan lifestyle: 'Victoria is renowned for its scenic beauty, fascinating multicultural heritage, unique sporting events and enviable cosmopolitan lifestyle' (Victorian Government 2006: 1). To ensure the consistency of its marketing, in 2006 the State Government established the Brand Victoria Services Unit within Tourism Victoria and the unit now manages the integration of brand values and key messages through Brand Victoria and Brand Melbourne. As the Brand Victoria website puts it: 'Brand Victoria is a Victorian government initiative to position the State as a destination of choice for international students, investors, skilled migrants and tourists' (Victorian Government 2008a). India, of course, is on their list of targets in all four categories.

However, Brand Victoria's definition of 'cosmopolitan' as an attribute of Melbourne differs from the cosmopolitanism of Toor and Cheah. Where Toor associates Indian cosmopolitanism with young urban professionals, Brand Victoria associates the cosmopolitanism of Melbourne with multiculturalism: 'Fuelled by successive waves of immigration from Europe, the Middle East and Asia, Australia's most cosmopolitan city is today the home, workplace and playground for more than 3.6 million harmonious and culturally diverse people' (Victorian Government n.d.). Instead of resulting from global capitalism, with its corporate offices, casinos and shopping malls, as one might expect from watching Indian films, Melbourne's cosmopolitanism is presented as an effect of its culturally diverse population.

Tourism Victoria features 'Bollywood in Melbourne' on the Indian section of its website, inviting potential Indian visitors to 'Experience famous Melbourne sights captured in Salaam Namaste' and 'Spend time on the Mornington Peninsula, Preity Zinta style' (Tourism Victoria n.d.). For Tourism Victoria, *Salaam Namaste* and, more recently, *Chak De! India*, are opportunities to market a Melbourne that is not only cosmopolitan but also multicultural:

> The cosmopolitan Australian city of Melbourne has played a leading role in two of India's latest blockbuster Bollywood films, *Chak De India* and *Salaam*

> *Namaste* … Also filmed on location in Melbourne in late 2006, *Chak De India* starring heartthrob Shahrukh Khan, showcases aspects of this vibrant multicultural city, from famous sporting venues and picturesque parks to its renowned riverside café scene.
>
> (Tourism Victoria n.d.)

Yet the cosmopolitanism that Film Victoria offers Indian film-makers is less a mixing of migrants from different parts of the globe than a mixing of global consumer products: 'Regarded as the cultural capital of Australia, Melbourne is stylish and sophisticated and offers a whole world of food, wine, sports, shopping and nightlife' (Film Victoria n.d.: 8).

Melbourne's attempt to associate an 'enviable cosmopolitan lifestyle' with multiculturalism results in what the Australian anthropologist, Ghassan Hage, has called 'cosmo-multiculturalism'. Hage links cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism to the consumption of ethnicized products by a cultural elite, the products acting as markers of cultural sophistication:

> The classiness required by cosmo-multiculturalism is not only the product of accumulating money capital … [It requires] a specific cosmopolitan capital accumulated through exposure to a certain 'sophisticated internationalism' which gives the cosmopolitans a global consciousness of the field in which they are operating.
>
> (Hage 1998: 204–05)

As an example of cosmopolitan capital, Hage notes that in his research study, 'those who possessed the capacity to appreciate ethnic cuisine were not necessarily the richest, although the possession of money capital was clearly significant' (Hage 1998: 204). According to Hage's definition of cosmo-multiculturalism, ethnicized non-White migrants are by and large not cosmopolitan, though they produce the ethnic goods and services which allow the affluent White cosmopolitans to exercise their 'global consciousness' as consumers. They are, typically, those who work in Melbourne's ethnic restaurants, like Ramji the Iyer cook in *Nala Damayanthi* making pudina dosa and kal dosa for both South Asian and non-South Asian customers of the Mahabharath vegetarian restaurant.

However, the rise of the cosmopolitan lifestyle has occurred largely since Hage coined the term 'cosmo-multiculturalism', and Melbourne's 'whole world of food, wine, sports, shopping and nightlife' (Film Victoria n.d.: 8) has become available to a broader range of consumers. The cultural capital required today is less that of a 'sophisticated internationalism', as Hage puts it, than a sophisticated international consumerism, and while Melbourne is also marketed to visitors as a venue for international music, theatre and visual art, Melbourne's 'sophistication' as a global city depends, rather, on the 'glamour zones' inhabited by young, mobile professionals: 'Melbourne is an exciting, modern metropolis, bustling with award winning restaurants, hip music venues, cool bars, streets of sensational shopping and fun beachside scenes' (Film Victoria n.d.: 13). Brand Melbourne's cosmopolitanism is related more to a collection of corporate spaces than to the city's culturally diverse population.

Given this fit between the 'consumable heroes' of Indian films and Brand Melbourne's enviable cosmopolitan, consumerist lifestyle, it is not surprising that award-winning restaurants and cool bars make frequent appearances in Indian films shot in Melbourne. However, Melbourne can claim little credit here, as most of the interiors will have been filmed in studios in Mumbai or Hyderabad, and such scenes are equally a feature of films set in Sydney, as in *Heyy Babyy* in which Akshay Kumar plays Arush Mehra, the manager of a Sydney night club, 'Greed'. Where Melbourne gains the edge over many cities is in its portrayal of 'sensational shopping', but it does so not through its shopping malls – the shopping scene in *Nala Damayanthi*, while set in Melbourne, is filmed in Sydney – but through the use of its trams to reinforce visually the link between a cosmopolitan lifestyle and conspicuous consumption.

In *Nala Damayanthi*, the window of a tram on which Ramji is travelling is filmed from such an angle that it reflects the Crown Casino's illuminated signage, and while in the same film the cutaway to the tram advertising Sorbent toilet tissue may not excite the consumer passions of a yuppie Indian audience, in *Unnale Unnale* advertisements covering the entire tram – which 'provide exceptional cut-through with the entire tram … becoming a 3D creative opportunity' (APN Outdoor 2008) – are used strategically to link consumerism with an urban lifestyle. On a musical shopping spree in 'Hello Miss *Imsaiyae*', Deepika dances past the Myer department store twirling shopping bags while a Melbourne tram advertising G-Star Raw

Figure 2: 'Tanisha and Vinay in front of an entire tram advertisement for L'Oréal cosmetics featuring Aishwarya Rai. Publicity still for Unnale Unnale*, Oscar Films Pvt. Ltd.'*

Denim clothing passes behind her. And the tram in the publicity still before which Vinay and Tanisha pose (and which appears briefly in the film's opening sequence) carries an entire tram advertisement for L'Oréal cosmetics featuring the brand's 'ambassador', Aishwarya Rai. Rai has also been a brand ambassador for Longines watches, Nakshatra Diamonds, Coca-Cola, Pepsi and, most recently, Lux soap, all of which makes her effectively a brand ambassador for the kind of cosmopolitan consumerist lifestyle portrayed in Indian movies. So, at the risk of a poor pun, we could say that the Melbourne tram has become a vehicle for promoting a global consumerism, both indirectly through the tram's association with a modern urban lifestyle and directly as 'a 3D creative opportunity' for advertising global consumer products. Much like the celebrity Aishwarya Rai, in fact.

Melbourne and the corporate CBD in Indian popular cinema

Melbourne's ability to attract Indian film-makers is not only a way of showcasing Melbourne in India but is also an index of the success with which Melbourne can market itself as a global city, central to which is the visual appearance of Melbourne's CBD. This is not to argue that all global cities are the same, and as Sassen points out, they may specialize in the different corporate services global markets require, such as banking, insurance, advertising and call-centres (BPOs) (Sassen 2002: 8, 16). Moreover, as the case of Melbourne's trams demonstrates, distinctive features can be mobilized to support a claim to global status. But as Sassen also argues, despite the impact of information technologies, the CBD 'remains a key form of centrality' (Sassen 2002: 13), and the foundation of Melbourne's success in the global market for film locations lies in the degree to which its CBD can, as Film Victoria puts it, 'replicate' a global city: 'Urban Melbourne is an exhilarating international city of over three million people. Its busy city streets are shadowed by towering skyscrapers allowing it to replicate large North American cities such as New York and Chicago' (Film Victoria n.d.: 8).

In this sense, consideration of Melbourne in Indian cinema gives a broader perspective to the argument of Kapur and Pendakur that the redefinition of the global city in Indian cinema is about 'homogenizing cities as spaces of consumption rather than the production of goods, services, or political associations' (Kapur and Pendakur 2007: 46–47). To focus on spaces of consumption is to miss the significance of the Melbourne locations in *Chak De! India*; there are very few exterior shots of Melbourne and the urban space depicted is not so much a space of consumption as corporate space, both public and private. Kabir Khan (Shah Rukh Khan) and the Indian hockey team fly into Melbourne with an aerial shot of the Telstra Dome sports venue: they pass through Melbourne airport; they climb onto a Greyhound coach and they are deposited at the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre. There are no shots of Melbourne's 'award winning restaurants, hip music venues, cool bars, [and] streets of sensational shopping', and this may well be due to the lack of a love story, dance numbers and affluent Indians in the film. Yet by stripping away these elements we can see more clearly the corporate nature of the global city onto which Bollywood's dazzling displays of conspicuous consumption are superimposed.

Apart from the depiction of the team's arrival from New Delhi, *Chak De! India* contains few exterior shots of Melbourne, and the city is reduced to glimpses of the area surrounding the Vodafone Arena during the team's early morning training runs. The Arena is one of the many infrastructure projects carried out by the Victorian State Government in the 1990s and remains in public ownership. However, while the appearance of the Vodafone Arena in *Chak De! India* provides Tourism Victoria with the opportunity to promote Melbourne as 'one of the world's great sporting capitals' (Tourism Victoria n.d.) – a promotion made credible by the construction of sporting venues prior to the Melbourne Commonwealth Games in 2006 – the venue was associated with global capital through the sale of its naming rights to UK-based multinational Vodafone (the name appears on the building in the movie but has been air-brushed out on the movie poster). Such is the fickleness of corporate sponsorship, however, that in 2008 the venue was renamed the Hisense Arena after the Chinese electronics multinational.

The point is that, as is the case with Melbourne's trams, public-private partnerships are more than about financing urban infrastructure: on the one hand, Melbourne gains state-of-the-art trams, bridges and sporting venues to support its aspiring global city status, while on the other, multinational corporations and their interests become identified with Melbourne. And what makes this such a good fit is that governments and multinational corporations both seek to be associated with the values of a similarly defined global lifestyle. Integrated product placements in *Chak De! India* include McDonald's, Bisleri mineral water and Puma, but the main brand placement is the 'sponsorship' of the hockey team by an Indian cement producer, UltraTech Cement Ltd. The link between cement and hockey may seem tenuous, more so since UltraTech is controlled by Grasim Industries, a textile manufacturer (which in turn is part of the Aditya Birla Group of companies, a multinational corporation based in Mumbai). However, when asked why they chose to advertise in *Chak De! India*, UltraTech's chief marketing officer, O. P. Puranmalka, explained: 'it has helped us reinforce the brand attributes such as "global winner", "modern & youthful", "tech-savvy", and yet "intrinsically Indian" amongst our core target groups across India' (Anon. 2007a). These brand attributes, or more properly the corporate branding of UltraTech Cement Ltd., are consistent with Toor's description of the new Indian social class produced by economic liberalization. But the attributes of UltraTech's corporate branding are also consistent with the attributes of Brand Melbourne, and it is hard to escape the conclusion that global corporations and governments with global aspirations are collaborating to create the kinds of corporate urban spaces that reflect and sustain, as Kapur and Pendakur put it, 'the lives and aspirations of the upper sections of the Indian international professional and managerial middle class, a group that services global business, travels frequently, and consumes the same brands as their international counterparts' (Kapur and Pendakur 2007: 51).

Madhur Bhandarkar, in films like *Page 3* (2003) and *Traffic Signal* (2007), has scrutinized both Mumbai's world of celebrity and the world of its urban poor, and in *Corporate* (2006) Bhandarkar dissects the ethos of precisely those young corporate executives whose patterns of consumption

Kapur and Pendakur deplore. In such a context, it is perhaps ironic that Bhandarkar negotiated a deal with one of India's top fashion labels, Allen Solly – 'targeted at [the] young, contemporary corporate' (Aditya Birla Nuvo 2008) – to outfit all the characters in *Corporate*, a deal that Mr. Hemchandra Javeri, President of Madura Garments, which owns the Allen Solly label, was nonetheless enthusiastic about:

> It is prestigious to be associated with the movie *Corporate.* The characters portrayed in the movie are youthful, achievers and trendsetters. The look for the film has been specially created by Allen Solly and fits the image of the characters perfectly.
>
> (Aditya Birla Group 2006)

Whether ironic or not, there is a level of irony in the fact that Madura Garments is owned by the Indian conglomerate, Aditya Birla Nuvo Ltd., which in turn is part of the Aditya Birla Group (the same group that owns UltraTech, the 'sponsor' of the Indian hockey team in *Chak De! India*). However, though the sporting ethos of *Chak De! India* is linked through integrated corporate branding to the unethical world of *Corporate*, such is the dovetailing between governments and multinationals that it is hard to say whether the irony is at the expense of Indian sporting nationalism or corporate sponsorship.

Conclusion

An analysis of the representation of Melbourne in Indian cinema demonstrates that the shopping mall is part of a much broader vision of urban space, and while Melbourne may be 'the top Australian destination for shopping' (Destination Melbourne. n.d.), the other aspect of a lifestyle of conspicuous consumption is, as Toor puts it, 'making a profit'. Hindi films, in particular, feature young, mobile and affluent corporate workers able to shop freely because they have adopted a lifestyle consistent with working for multinational corporations. Such corporations not only advertise their lifestyle products through Hindi cinema, they also locate their operations in the CBDs of the global city, and it is important to recognize that Sassen's 'glamour zones' include not just up-market shopping complexes but, in Ramanan's words, 'state-of-the-art office buildings, luxury hotels, and fancy apartment blocks that house the "hyper-urban professionals" of the global economy'. Melbourne's 'enviable cosmopolitan lifestyle' (Victorian Government 2006: 1) is cosmopolitan not solely because it shares a globalized consumer culture, but also because urban regeneration partnerships between the government and multinational corporations have resulted in a CBD which is visually familiar to young, overseas corporate professionals. It is, perhaps, a measure of Melbourne's success in being able to replicate a top rank global city that the exterior shot of Melbourne's Crown Casino complex in *Salaam Namaste* re-appears in its director's next film, *Ta Ra Rum Pum*, set in New York.

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Looking for Love in All the White Places: A Study of Skin Color Preferences on Indian Matrimonial and Mate-Seeking Websites

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Abstract

A preference for light skinned females is a global bias that affects all areas of human relationships, especially in marital mate selection. Further intensified by the meteoric rise in Internet dating and mate selection, this bias often serves an invalidating function for darker-skinned women. This study (1) analyzed 'profiles' and 'preferences' of brides and grooms (N=200), and (2) coded 'success story wedding photos' (N=200) posted on four Indian matrimonial websites. Results showed an overwhelming bias among males for brides lighter-skinned than themselves. Males were also more likely than females to state a preference for skin color in their prospective brides, and to use qualitative words like 'beautiful' and 'lovely' to describe their preferred match. Most significantly, the 'success story' wedding photos consistently had lighter-skinned brides than grooms. Dark-skinned women were almost non-existent in these 'success stories.' This research points to a technology-abetted intensification of colorism. That is to say that the powerful profile 'menu' options and the visual imagery of predominantly light-skinned, 'successful' brides illustrated on current websites visually reinforce the invalidation of dark skinned women.

Keywords

Internet matchmaking
Colorism
Indian marriage market
Technology and women
Skin Color

Introduction

Mate-seeking preferences are significant for relationships, marriage, and family life, but those preferences also illuminate larger cultural themes, including our notions of status, beauty, and gender. These themes intersect when we examine the role of skin color discrimination on mate selection, particularly for women. Hunter contends that, 'Little attention has been paid to how skin color operates differently in the lives of women' (Hunter 2002: 177). For decades, the bias toward lighter-skinned females has been examined from feminist, anthropological, and sociological perspectives. In an increasingly visual and technocratic culture embedded in a globalized mass media environment, new information and communication technologies intensify these preferences, exacerbating skin color biases on a global level.

Pervasive in the literature is the finding that skin tone bias debilitates women's advancement. Globally, lighter skin tones equate with increased

social capital, becoming a symbol of beauty, resulting in higher earning capability and more resources (Hunter 2002; Glenn 2008). Popular media prolong this myth, and computer-mediated communication (specifically, matrimonial sites) possibly now creates channels for further discrimination.

In examining the rapid growth of Internet mate-seeking and of Indian matrimonial websites, we seek to answer the call for international research on skin color bias, and, particularly, the role of technology in shaping gender politics. Margaret Hunter (2002, 2005), whose work examines skin color bias in African American and Mexican communities, has urged that scholarship on light skin as 'social capital' and as a site of oppressive gendered politics, must be extended beyond studies of white populations. In particular, she calls for research in diverse communities and countries that contrast and compare internalized and gendered racism, which leads to personal and private pain that a skin color bias creates in women's lives. In his critique of feminist research, Mickey Lee calls for 'global feminist political economic analysis of women and new communication and information technologies' (Lee 2006: 1). In particular, Lee argues for feminist research to examine why certain technologies come into existence and how women come to interact with these technologies. Lee points out that when the social structure is dominated by a gender ideology, the role that women play in telecommunications becomes one of the most important areas of research for contemporary feminist scholarship.

This study extends Hunter's (2002, 2005) earlier work on skin tone bias into an international context and Lee's (2006) call to focus on the ways virtual channels impact women, by examining the case of Indian matrimonial websites. Specifically, we focus on how a gendered ideology functions behind the production of those matrimonial websites to facilitate skin color bias that creates profound repercussions for women, in general, and for dark-skinned women, in particular. This international/technological focus is particularly critical for India, where a globalized modernism, coupled with advancing technological prowess, is possibly intensifying and institutionalizing a colorism that is deeply rooted in Indian history and culture.

Literature Review

Colorism and Gender

Colorism – described as internal discrimination based on skin color that usually occurs within ethnic/racial groups – has had a long history within African American and Mexican American communities (Bryant 2001; Fears 1998; Hill 2000, 2002; Kerr 2005; Montalvo 2004; Banks 2000). Peter Frost (2005) argues that almost all human societies have always shown a cultural preference for fair complexions, especially in women, even long before Black slavery and European colonialism. However, Hunter (2002) specifically shows how the hierarchy of desirability based on skin tone creates standards of beauty for women that are seeded in the European colonization over Mexicans and the beginnings of African American slavery.

Contemporary media strongly reinforce colorism, and multinational mass media promote a homogenized global body image that is being

telecast the world over (Glenn 2008). Furthermore, media and advertising foster a hegemonic notion of skin tone that clearly privileges light-skinned women as more desirable than dark-skinned women. In romance films, African American women are often significantly lighter than their male counterparts. In contemporary U.S. advertising, lighter-skinned African American women are perceived as being closer to the beauty ideal than are dark-skinned women (Frisby 2006; Strutton & Lumpkin 1993). Similarly signaled by the term 'white jade' as a Chinese metaphor for fairness, skin tone bias is deeply entrenched in contemporary Asian advertising. (Leong 2006).

According to Aaron Celious and Daphna Oyserman's 2001 study of the heterogeneous race model, African Americans have struggled through skin tone discrimination, which is deeply gendered as well. Furthermore, Margaret Hill (2002) argues that a double standard exists for the role of skin tone and attractiveness among African American males and females, with females subjected to more oppressive pressure than males based on these qualities. In general, Hill found that lighter-toned African Americans have greater economic status, including higher levels of education and wealth. Darker-skinned women not only have lower levels of education and wealth compared to lighter-skinned African American women, they also are labeled as less attractive. Darker-skinned African American males do not have the same struggles as their female counterparts, as darker skin for males is viewed as more attractive. Considering that darker-toned African American women are viewed as less attractive, it is assumed that they do not receive the same treatment 'in all settings: intraracial [within the same race] and interracial' (Hill 2002: 161).

Colorism has deeply personal and economic consequences for women. For example, studies of African American women's self-image have shown that women dissatisfied with their skin color tend to be dissatisfied with their overall appearance (Bond & Cash 1992; Falconer & Neville 2000). Similarly, because skin color is highly coded, light skin functions as a form of symbolic capital, augmented or conflated with notions of beauty and femininity (Glenn 2008; Hill 2002; Hunter 2005) which can then be converted to other forms of capital. As Margaret Hunter explains, 'Women who possess this form of (beauty) capital are able to convert it into economic capital, educational capital, or another form of social capital.' (Hunter 2005: 37) Maxine Leeds (1994) refers to this privileging of light female skin tone as a pigmentocracy. When colorism becomes part of the cultural fabric, it promotes social stratification and exclusion based on invalidating preferences. This exclusion creates what Roksana Rahman calls 'social closure,' which occurs 'when one group monopolizes advantages by closing off opportunities to other groups' (Rahman 2002: 28) (e.g. a New England wealthy socialite community or inbreeding of royal blood), especially evident in the marriage market. The following section traces the ways colorism is mediated in India through cultural practices and media representation.

Colorism and India

India's marriage system has consistently been studied for its patriarchal domination that disadvantages women financially, socially, and psychologically.

Kakoli Banerjee (1999) documented gender-stratified marriage rules (such as lower marriage age for women, as well as the institutionalization of the dowry system) as operating in the context of hierarchical society and shaping women's marriage opportunities historically and currently. Roy and Tisdell (2002) have examined the property rights of women in rural India to find several institutionalized impediments stacked against single and married women's rights to property. Socially, over the past few decades, beauty and fairness ideals have also become increasingly institutionalized in the marriage market, once again, disadvantaging women. Skin color has functioned 'as a visual agent' in placing individuals 'in a local social hierarchy, if not an increasing global one' (Leong 2006: 167).

The preference for lighter skin in South Asian cultures, particularly India, has been traced to the region's early Aryan invasion and, later, British colonization (Berreman 1967; Moore & Eldredge 1970). Traditional and contemporary Indian culture show a preference for females with light complexion in marriage, given other considerations being relatively equal (Beteille 1981, 1992; Moore & Eldredge 1970). Over the past few decades, scholars particularly have pointed out how the caste system in India promotes the hierarchy of skin color, since lighter skin is more likely to be seen in higher caste members, Brahmins, with darker skin viewed as being of a lower caste (Ambedkar [1948] 1969; Beteille 1981, 1992; Sen 2001). Frost (2005) points out that Indian society and several Indian languages use words such as 'beautiful' and 'lovely' synonymously with the words 'fair' or 'light-skinned.'

Hindi, the national language of India, has a specific word for coloring among women: *Gourangi* (which, literally translated, means 'the one who has the coloring of a white cow') or *Gori*, which means fair complexion/skin tone. *Gori*, however, means not merely fair-skinned but also beautiful, and, in fact, 'girl/woman,' thereby obliterating not merely beauty but femininity itself for those women who do not have lighter skin. Indian popular cinema (Bollywood), which has a significant impact on Indian consciousness (Mishra 2002; Vasudevan 2000), is riddled with references to skin color as essentially synonymous with womanhood. Bollywood film songs over the decades have made references to women as *Gori*. As an example of this bias demonstrated towards light-skinned women as embodiments not just of beauty but also femininity, female Bollywood actors consistently have been lighter-skinned than male actors (Glenn 2008).

To compound the invalidating effects built into traditional cultural norms, the entry of Western media into the Indian cultural landscape, coupled with India's economic liberalization beginning in the 1980s, has led to the pre-eminence of western standards of beauty in India. Globalization has changed India's nationhood by intertwining India's traditional cultural norms with Western norms, creating a mediated ideology that focuses on a 'cultural standard for the global elite' (Fernandes 2000: 620). In this mediated context, light skin signals the elite, whereas dark skin equates with lower status.

What happens to darker-skinned women's body image when western, white women set the dominant standard for beauty? Some clues may be available from a survey of South Asian University students in Canada

(Sahay & Piran 1997). Skin-color preferences and body satisfaction among 100 South Asian-Canadian and 100 European-Canadian female university students showed that the South Asian-Canadian females were found to desire lighter skin than they possessed and had lower body satisfaction compared with European-Canadian females, showing that skin tone, in fact, embodies the body.

However, globalized media effects, such as desire for whiteness by women, is no longer limited to diaspora communities of color living in the land of the white. The collective impact of globalized marketing and media is a packaged westernized, global body image telecast right into homes in countries around the world, including India. This telecast visual image of the 'successful' Indian woman is embodied in the 1990s Indian beauty queens, with an ensuing cultural impact that was to have reverberating consequences even today. In 1994, two Indian models, Sushmita Sen and Aishwarya Rai, won the Miss Universe and Miss World pageants, respectively, and their victory propelled a frenzied celebration in the Indian mass media. Their victory also gave rise to a beauty industry that marketed cosmetics and more beauty queens. In addition to this, their presence in Bollywood films further entrenched the global ideal of the light-skinned, tall, westernized beauty (Glenn 2008). For example, Indian model Sheetal Mallar, who has been featured in *Elle Magazine* and has modeled for Maybelline cosmetic products, is presented in a Western 'construct' yet is labeled as an 'international' model (Chaudhuri 2001: 377).

Scholars discuss this beauty obsession as the production of a cultural hero whose success, fitness, and grooming regimens are covered at length in mainstream media. This coverage lends strength to the consumptive ideologies of India's middle class and celebrates the beauty professionals and beauty industry that forms a growing part of this emerging, liberalized global economy (Parmeswaran 2004; Runkle 2004). Indian female beauty is calibrated by Indian women's magazine *Femina* (organizer of beauty pageants in India) through whiteness, brownness, and Indianness, as representative of the globalized Indian woman (Reddy 2006).

Beauty queens who represent ideal Indian and globalized womanhood, in conjunction with economic liberalization in India's markets, have generated a boom in beauty products. Within India's cosmetics industry, fairness creams, with a growth rate of 12–14% per year, lead the market (Baxter 2000). These creams are known to contain bleaching and burning agents, which, in recent years, have resulted in widespread physical damage, such as an increased incidence of cosmetic dermatitis (Baxter 2000; Kumar & Paulose 2006). The most prominent fairness cream in India is explicitly labeled, 'Fair & Lovely'; this product's advertising and marketing has come under consistent vocal protests from feminist groups in India (Challapalli 2002; Chowdhury & Halarnkar 1998; Leistikow 2003). Discriminatory advertisements of this product show a female protagonist, unable to find not just a groom but even a job, all due to her dark skin. Implicit in this advertising of Fair & Lovely cream is the message that 'fair' is not only equal to 'lovely' but also to 'successful' in personal and professional life.

These media images produce a hegemony of light-skinned beauty. According to Ronald Barthes (1972), myths are created by visuals signs

linked with already present ideological assumptions. These myths then 'perpetuate and reinforce the values and preferences of the dominant ideology' (Leong 2006: 171). Therefore, the advertisements and visual signs of lighter-skinned beauty queens perpetuate the myth that fair skin is more desirable than darker skin. More than that, media hegemony perpetuates the historically ingrained myths of the ruling class (Chaudhuri 2001: 375).

Desire for whiteness finds expression in the existence of intraracial discrimination (Gibson 1931; Russell, Midge & Hall 1992; Thompson 1994) in the use of skin whiteners and cosmetics designed to make one look more white (Buchanan 1993; Dansby 1972; Divakaruni 2000; Gawle 2002; Holtzman 1973). This desire also affects mate selection. The desire comes closer to fulfillment when given choices for intense selection in the online marriage market.

A recent study of matrimonial advertisements in two prominent English language newspapers in India, Bahuguna (2004) found that the 1960s ideal of the pretty and virgin bride has given way to an enhanced emphasis on physical attributes and earning capability. In the 1960s, a bride's beauty was idealized more in terms of talent (like singing) rather than physical attributes, and 'decent' marriages (implying dowry) were the norm. The 1970s marked the emergence of sought-after attributes such as the convent-educated (i.e. English-speaking), smart, working women, and also physical attributes, such as height and fairness. In the 1980s, however, physical beauty emerged as the dominant ideal, particularly skin color, which then became more important than talent, even though the working woman earning an income became desirable in the marriage market. By the 1990s, the media had ushered in the era of the super-bride, thus institutionalizing the ideal of women's necessary physical perfection. In short, whiteness and a fair-skinned complexion became a form of social capital for females in attracting males. In India, a highly status-conscious society, this form of social capital is intensified through a complex, mediated, techno-facilitated marriage market.

Colorism and the Internet: Indian mate-seeking services

Globalization has ushered in new social networks for mate seeking across the world. In particular, because of the explosive global growth of the Internet over the last decade, online dating is booming in the United States, Europe, and Asia. As Smith has observed, the online dating industry is turning into a 'multi-billion dollar love story for e-commerce customers' (Smith 2005: 29). Revenues from online dating services in the United States for 2001 were $72 million, and by 2002, revenues had reached $302 million (Smith 2005: 21). Over the past five years, U.S. revenues have increased steadily at an average of 5 per cent a year and are projected to reach $932 million by 2011 (JupiterResearch.Com, 2007). European online dating services have had strong growth since 2003; in 2006, revenues were 243 million Euros and are projected to reach 549 million Euros in 2011 (Tracey 2007). Furthermore, online dating services in China (which has the second largest population of Internet users) produced revenues of $11.2 million in 2005 and are expected to grow to $81 million by 2008 (Zhou & Zhuoqiong, 2006).

Between 2006 and 2007, India had the eighth largest Internet population (just behind France), with the number of users increasing from 33 per cent to 21.1 million (Mills 2007). Internet growth has been accompanied by increased online matrimonial websites. According to one report (www.australianIT.com), 15 per cent of Indians go online for matrimonial searches, and another study showed that more people in India are becoming Internet users in order to become matrimonial site users (Guenthner 2007).

According to Guenthener's 2007 study, this growing popularity of online matrimonial sites is seen not merely among Indians living in India but in the Indian diaspora as well. Overall, these sites have drawn huge investments: Yahoo! and Canaan Partners invested $8.65 million in BharatMatrimony.com, one of India's largest dating websites. This website alone is expected to register 2.5 million users in 2006–2007, compared to 1.5 million registered in 2005–2006 (Guenthner 2007). The popularity of Indian matrimonial sites has been furthered by the ever-increasing number of success stories displayed on matchmaking websites (Pepper 2007).

The growth of technological power in globalized India also illustrates the paradox of traditional biases superimposing themselves on modern culture. On the one hand, the Indian information technology sector leads India's modern economy; on the other hand, these same Internet technologies present opportunities for traditional patterns of matchmaking and mate seeking. Beyond allowing people to browse profiles, build preferences, and 'refine' dream mate selection, these sites allow for excluding candidates on the basis of skin color. Drop-down menus for 'complexion' prompt users to choose the skin tone of their preferred mates. This menu design allows for social closure by allowing e-cueing for colorism (providing prompts that essentially cue the selection of skin tone that otherwise might not have been included in people's preferences). In the West, Match.com, the world's largest Internet dating site that originated in the USA (http://www.consumerresearch.com/winternet/online-dating,) uses race and ethnicity as categories for selection, but not skin tone. However, 'success photos' (images of couples who met and married through the Indian sites) may construct a skin-tone bias with preferences for lighter-skinned women.

Beyond its general impact on mate-seeking, online dating also has developed its own form of social closure. Mate-seeking sites offer an electronic means of interaction and attraction that bypasses face-to-face communication, but, ironically, does not bypass skin-color bias. As new technological advances gain substantial popularity, mate-seeking can bypass initial face-to-face interaction, leaving interaction, selection, and matching to the digital age (Ahuvia and Adelman 1991). In other words, the loss of interpersonal contact for initial mate selection converts the process into a form of e-order consumption, eliminating the potential for people to 'discover' attraction in the course of interacting with a potential mate.

Finally, dating intermediaries, such as computer-dating services, matchmakers, and singles clubs, create a 'shopping effect,' or the perception that there is an endless supply of potential mates (Ahuvia & Adelman 1991, p. 282). However real or imagined the potential options may be, with

search specifications, computers enable users to delimit a range of desirable (or undesirable) features for other people such as their education, religion, or body type, projecting that the greater the perceived supply, the greater the perceived possibility for upgrading.

Contrary to the popular belief that dating service users are 'losers,' Ahuvia, Adelman and Schroeder (1991) found that users of the dating service they studied were very selective. The authors contend that dating service users, in fact, primarily are 'choosers' with a high sense of entitlement, who use computer dating to set up highly stratified personal profiles for what they consider to be an ideal search. On the surface, these specifications could represent a very discerning population, but these profiles also create a commodification for mate-seeking where one can order up a McDate with all the fixings, thus allowing for invalidating preferences to take hold and, consequently, becoming a form of marriage profiling. Today, despite the celebrated power of the Internet to empower women (Siddiquee & Kagan 2006; Kelly, Pomerantz & Currie 2006; Kort, 2005), with a click of a mouse, technological advances systematically can reinforce regressive practices rooted in colorism.

Research Questions:

The preceding literature prompted us to explore two research questions:

1. Do males on Indian matrimonial websites indicate a preference in their mate selection for females that are lighter-skinned than themselves?
2. Do males on Indian matrimonial websites ultimately marry females whose skin tone is lighter than their own?

Methodology

The websites chosen for analysis were four popular Indian matrimonial websites used by South Asian brides, grooms, and families in India, as well as within the Indian diaspora: Shaadi.Com, JeevanSaathi.com, and BharatMatrinomy.com, and RediffMatchmaker.com (Amar 2008).

The home pages and profile menus of these sites provide some important indicators that merit noting. The home page of Shaadi.com (which advertises itself as 'the world's largest matrimonial service') includes in its immediate drop-down search menu the choices of looking for a bride/groom by age range, community (42 possibilities of religion and sub-castes), and country. The categorization of country is an important indicator of the use of this site by Indian diaspora; the categories include India, USA, UK, United Arab Emirates, Australia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Canada, and South Africa. Each of the four websites lists 'complexion' as a category in the profile presentations. Two out of the four websites – ReddifMatchmaker.com and Shaadi.com – listed 'complexion' within the first five attributes displayed on each member's profile.

Sample

This study drew upon two types of data sets from these Indian matrimonial websites. Data Set 1 consisted of 25 male and 25 female profiles posted online on each of the same four matrimonial websites, leading to

an 'N' of 200 profiles, downloaded as pdf files during May 2006. Only those profiles in which the member had included a picture of herself/himself were included. Similarly, for the purpose of providing a comprehensive analysis of each unit, only those profiles that included a section on 'Desired Mate' were included (some members choose only to provide details about themselves, leaving the 'Desired Mate' section blank). Each of these websites allowed for a function where a member could pick a 'Desired Complexion' in his/her 'Desired Match.'

For analysis, details from the profiles of each category on the 200 sample profiles were noted. For the purpose of this study, the following attributes were noted from each profile: (a) self complexion stated in profile (each website provided a drop-down menu of complexions that included very fair, fair, wheatish, wheatish brown, medium brown, brown, dark, very dark, or not specified,) and (b) complexion desired in a mate.

Finally, the descriptive essays in each profile, where present, were analyzed. This textual analysis looked for physical descriptions of a desired match. As noted earlier, Frost (2005) suggested that descriptive words signifying beauty become codes for lighter skin tones. Therefore, these descriptive words in the essays on the profiles were divided into categories, titled (a) superlative words, such as 'beautiful,' 'pretty' 'lovely' and 'gorgeous'; (b) moderate words, such as 'attractive,' 'cute,' and 'good looking'; (c) modest words, such as 'homely,' 'presentable,' and 'average'; (d) no preferences; and (e) no description provided. It is important to note here the distinction between the latter two categories; whereas 'no preferences' suggests an indifference to skin tone, 'no description provided' could suggest other reasons.

Data Set 2 included sample wedding photos posted online on the home pages of these four websites under links titled 'Success Stories' or 'Successful Marriages.' These photos were sent in by couples that found their mates online, through the website on which they now post their 'success story,' as visual, as well as verbal, testimonials presented on links accompanying the photographs. The first fifty success story photos were downloaded from each site, for a total of 200 photos.

These photographs, downloaded as pdf. files during May 2006, were then coded by visually examining and comparing the skin color/complexion of the bride and the groom in the wedding picture. The coding was done by three coders: one coder was of East Indian ethnicity and the other two were Caucasian American. All coders were female. A coding protocol and corresponding coding instructions were created for analyzing the success story photos, which were the unit of analysis. A separate sample (not used in this study) was used for coders to familiarize themselves with gradations of skin tone (complexion). The grades given to skin tone were: 1 = *very fair*; 2 = *fair*, 3 = *wheatish* (a description used by Indians to describe skin color as likened to the color of wheat), 4 = *dark*, and 5 = *very dark*. Coders then indicated gradations of skin color (from 1-5) in two separate columns, for the groom and bride, for each of the wedding photos. The inter-coder reliability coefficient for these gradations, using Scott's Pi was .91.

Because matching of data pools (individual profiles matched to wedding pictures) is not possible under current configurations online, Data Set 2,

the success story photos, did not consist of the same people that made up Data Set 1, the profiles of mate-seeking members. Hence, we could not track the same members on the profile to see if they ended up as 'success stories.' However, since these images were captured during the same period in time, Data Set 1 serves as a close representation of the pool of profiles from which the wedded couples chose their mates.

Another important point to note is that, compared to the self-descriptions of complexions/skin color in the profiles, coders were provided with different coding categories for Data Set 2. This procedure was employed because each website used its own distinctive (and exhaustive) categorization for complexion/ skin color, ranging from 'very fair' to 'dark dark brown.'

In noting the attributes in the member profiles, we found that none of the males or females declared 'dark' or 'very dark' as a self-description of their complexion. It appears that the default status was 'wheatish,' which seems to serve as a catch-all phrase, whereas the category of 'dark' is a loaded, often stigmatized and culturally-charged term with a negative valence.

Therefore, coding the skin tones of brides and grooms in Data Set 2 required standardized categories. In standardizing these and including the dark and very-dark-skinned categories, we may well be accused of denying the self-identification of the members. However, in identifying these categories, we challenge the hegemony of needing to 'pass' and empower these terms as signifiers of color tone. We contend that the category of 'wheatish' as an umbrella term for a broad spectrum of tonal gradation, serves to deny the existence of darker skin tones and, in so doing, devalues and disempowers darker-skinned women.

Results

The first research question focused on males' mate-seeking preferences for lighter skin tone than themselves in a prospective mate. Table 1 shows the findings from analyses of Data Set 1: member profiles of males and their stated 'desired complexion' in their desired mates. Sixty-six out of 100 men stated 'no preference,' twelve desired 'very fair' mates, 21 desired 'fair' mates, one desired a 'wheatish' skin-toned mate, and none desired

	Stated Desired Appearance					
Stated Desired Complexion	**Superlative**	**Moderate**	**Modest**	**No Preference**	**No Description**	**Total**
No Preference	11	1	12	18	24	66
Very Fair	2	0	1	2	7	12
Fair	6	0	0	2	13	21
Wheatish	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total	19	1	13	22	45	100

Table 1: Comparisons of 'Stated Desired Complexion' and 'Stated Descriptive Statements of Desired Appearance of Mate' by Male Members on Matrimonial Websites.

Stated Desired Complexion	Stated Desired Appearance					
	Superlative	Moderate	Modest	No Preference	No Description	Total
No Preference	4	3	19	37	18	81
Very Fair	0	0	0	0	2	2
Fair	1	1	0	2	9	13
Wheatish	0	0	0	0	4	4
Total	5	4	19	39	33	100

Table 2: Comparisons of 'Stated Desired Complexion' and 'Stated Descriptive Statements of Desired Appearance of Mate' by Female Members on Matrimonial Websites.

'dark'- skinned women. Table 2 shows the findings of analyses from Data Set I, this time for females. In the case of females, 81 out of 100 stated 'no preference,' two stated a preference for 'very fair' mates, thirteen stated a preference for 'fair' skinned mates, four for wheatish skin-toned mates, and none for 'dark'-skinned mates. Although these results would suggest that color does not matter to the large majority of these mate seekers, a closer analysis of descriptive statements indicates otherwise.

Table 1 and Table 2 also show the results of the coding of members' qualitative, descriptive statements about the physical characteristics they prefer in their partners. When setting up profiles, male members were more likely than female members to use descriptive statements (of color), even when they had stated 'no preference' in the drop down menu available online. Moreover, males were more likely to use 'superlative' or 'modest' descriptions, whereas females mostly used 'modest' descriptions.

The second research question focused on males' ultimate marriage to females with skin tone lighter than their own. Analysis of Data Set 2 – 'Success Story' photographs of wedded couples – presents overwhelming evidence of the effects of colorism against women in the marriage market by comparing the skin color of grooms with those of their brides. 'Very

Male's Complexion	Female Complexion					
	Very Fair	Fair	Wheatish	Dark	Very Dark	Total
Fair	2	1	0	0	0	3
Very Fair	26	12	4	0	0	52
Wheatish	28	30	18	1	0	77
Dark	12	26	16	2	0	56
Very Dark	2	2	3	3	1	11
Total	80	71	41	6	1	200

Table 3: Comparisons of Skin Color of Brides and Grooms in 'Success Story' Photographs of Wedded Couples.

fair' grooms married 'very fair' (2 cases) or 'fair' (1 case) brides. The strongest result comes in the case of 'fair' grooms, who, in 36 cases, married 'very fair' brides; in twelve cases, they married 'fair' brides, and only in four cases did they marry women darker than themselves ('wheatish').

Grooms with a 'wheatish' skin tone, too, tended to marry a woman who was either lighter-skinned than them ('very fair' = 28; 'fair' = 30) or similar to them ('wheatish = 18). In only one case did a wheatish-skin-toned man marry a 'dark' skin-toned woman. Dark-skinned men married 'very fair' women in twelve cases, 'fair' women in 26 cases, 'wheatish' skinned women in sixteen cases, and 'dark' skinned women in only two cases. There was not one case of a dark-skinned man marrying a 'very dark'-skinned woman. Men whose skin color was graded as 'very dark,' married 'very fair' women in two cases, 'fair' women in two cases, 'wheatish' colored women in three cases, and 'dark'-skinned women in three cases. Only one case emerged where a very dark-skinned male married a very dark-skinned female.

One disturbing finding that emerges from the results is that despite documenting several dark-skinned and very dark-skinned female members among the profiles online (Data Set 1), very few dark-skinned (6 cases out of 100) or very dark-skinned (1 out of 100) women were found in the 'success story' photos of wedded couples (Data Set 2). While we are cautious to claim a direct correlation between Data Set I and Data Set II, especially since the latter involves self-reporting and uploading of wedding photos by couples themselves and is therefore less random a sample, we believe that the very power of this reportage comes from the 'success story' aspect. That is, Data Set II is the outcome, or the *married* face of Data Set I, which is the '*up for selection/marriage*' face. This is discussed in greater detail in the next section.

Discussion

Our study, although preliminary, suggests that dark-skinned women are falling through the matrimonial cracks. Despite the presence of dark-skinned female member profiles on these online mate-seeking services; it appears that these women are rarely selected as marriage partners. Although dark-skinned or very dark-skinned women may not be completely eliminated in the marriage market, an obliterating effect online is occurring for the profiles that signals that these women are undesirable, or, simply, invisible.

Most importantly, this obliterating effect comes from the construction of the self-descriptions for complexion and desired complexion within the menu of profiles placed online. A possible explanation of the influence of menu options is that they cue the user to engage in color discrimination. For example, by specifying 'complexion' (or skin tone) as an important criterion, offering a drop-down menu of options, such as 'very fair,' 'fair,' 'wheatish,' 'dark,' or 'very dark,' the mate-seeker is cued to indicate a preferred complexion/skin tone that perhaps he or she would not have otherwise considered noting. Even if 'no preference' is given in the menu of options, the very cue may replay itself in the description, where the user writes a narrative paragraph on what he or she is seeking in a mate. For example, the menu options may prompt a male to indicate that he is seeking

a 'fair-skinned' woman, although he initially indicated 'no preference.' Thus, the cueing can be overt or more subliminal in its prompting effect.

The menu function, then, serves not merely to reinforce existing biases but as a visual documentation, endorsement, and institutionalization of colorism. Such cues may possibly not have occurred to a mate-seeker, but their inclusion in the menu may be a powerful suggestion, nudging people along portals that may not be of their own original choice (Williams 2006).

Further, the virtual images of the lighter-skinned brides and darker-skinned husbands in the 'success story' photos inevitably invalidate the eligibility of dark-skinned women in the e-marriage market. Because identity is inscribed in skin tone, real or potential elimination in the computerized marriage pool models an invalidating self for dark-skinned women. In their study of identity creation in Internet dating, Jennifer Yurchisin et al argued that online experiences can validate or invalidate both 'now selves' and 'potential, hoped-for selves' (Yurchisin et al 2005: 740). Therefore, marriage websites that create desirable matches that systematically exclude people on the basis of skin tone affect the 'now self' of dark-skinned women, (e.g., by increasing their self-loathing) and also affect their potential hoped-for-selves (e.g. by reducing their self-perception that they have any value in the marriage market). As a result, these women may self-select out of the e-marriage pool, reducing their numbers and presence and, consequently, reinforcing their individual and collective invisibility.

The contributions of this study are significant in three areas. First, this study expands the examination of the whitening effect to an international population, specifically, India. Although prior studies of other countries indicate a similar pattern of mate preferences, it is critical to document this widespread phenomenon across national boundaries as evidence of institutionalized, globalized colorism. Second, this study draws on natural data sets found on matrimonial websites, which is preferable to data obtained through surveys and interviews. In using natural data sets, this study moves beyond impressionistic commentary to empirical analysis of online matrimonial advertisements for mate-seeking and marriage announcements in India. Finally, this study considers the ways technology and other media aid and abet what we refer to as 'invalidating preferences': those preferences, regardless of potential compatibility, that work to discriminate between prospective mates on the bases of skin tone.

As online matchmaking gains global momentum, what are the implications for dark-skinned women? The creation of communication through online matchmaking, although celebrated as a sign of liberalized, globalized modernism similar to the pageantry of global beauty contests, may, in fact, lead to a technological abetment of pigmentocracy. Future studies on mate-seeking are needed to grasp the interplay between technological and cultural practices and their sociological and psychological impact. For example, experimental studies could test for the cueing functions of menu options and other techno devices and stimuli that might trigger discriminatory responses. Studies that explore the angst of falling through the matrimonial cracks might include in depth analysis of narratives of women excluded from the marriage market, and narratives of males who

seek women with skin tones lighter than themselves. Sociologically, network studies would be helpful in confirming the social closure argued in this paper. As our literature review indicates, the social construction of skin tone is a complex intersection of mediated images and technological abetment. Studies that triangulate findings from various sources of this construction, as well as critical studies, would be useful in understanding the tangled web of discriminatory practices.

Russell et al argue that 'people's appearance and love lives are their own business, and should remain so. Yet, we share their conviction that an informed individual can make choices more freely and can better resist social practices and cultural attitudes that are meaningless and unfair' (1992: 7). The authors' conviction, however, has not been realized over time. In part, today's people's love lives are no longer their own business, but have become big business. As the Internet becomes a hegemonic matchmaker, we see a lessening of interpersonal or familial effects, such as a doting aunt orchestrating an arranged marriage match for a dark-skinned niece. Today, some eighteen years later, discrimination based on skin tone remains a pervasive, technologically facilitated global force in the mate-seeking process. We believe that this increasing commodification of women's bodies, and the far-reaching damage to those excluded from the mate-seeking pool, is a widespread phenomenon that needs to become central in discussions of globalization, media, technology, and marketing. Trivializing Internet dating services as a 'fad' does an injustice to their critical role in mate selection. We are not talking about casual dating practices, but new and pervasive forms of mate-seeking. In India, where marriage is critical for lifelong security and economic stability, discriminatory practices may disenfranchise a significant segment of the female population. More work is needed on the ways that digitalized mate-seeking can foster elitism and idealized uber-couples, diminishing any possibility of heterogeneity in dating, coupledom, marriage, and, ultimately, families.

Unquestionably, Internet dating/mating services extend social networks in innovative and important ways. With their rapid growth, these services may become the primary sources for dating and mate selection. However, along with the celebratory romances and weddings, we need to ask the question, 'Who does not get invited to the altar?' Furthermore, as attraction to the-girl-next-door is replaced with the-girl-in-the-browser-window, we need to understand how technological forces are shaping evolutionary and social forces (Buss & Barnes 1986; Howard, Blumstein and Schwartz 1987).

Finally, because computer mate seeking is a private, but pervasive and increasingly popular affair, we need to question its exclusionary power as a tool of oppression. As a cultural force, imbued with techno-status, the discriminatory power of these virtual matchmakers is difficult to resist. As this study suggests, search tools and drop-down menu options abide and abet discrimination, institutionalizing racism with fashionable efficiency. Evidence indicates that computer 'meetings' do not merely augment more naturally occurring, IRL (in real life) encounters; these digital forms of meeting are becoming primary sources for initiating contact with potential dates. Disguised as evidence of modernism and laws-of-attraction, in reality, virtual mate-seeking may well cloak a seductive, but blatant hegemony of colorism.

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Nationalism and Hindi Cinema: Narrative Strategies in *Fanaa*

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Abstract

This discussion draws upon the narrative strategies of the Bombay cinema blockbuster Fanaa *and examines larger questions of culture, nation and citizenship in contemporary India including: What kinds of gender, class and nationalist politics does it reinforce? What kinds of imagined communities does it give rise to? How does it regulate the borders of those communities? On what terms are Muslims offered citizenship in contemporary India? How might Bombay Cinema films function as a transnational cultural product?*

Keywords

Bombay Cinema
Muslims
Citizenship
Transnational cultural products

Introduction

Recent critical analysis (Kaur and Sinha 2005) has identified Bombay Cinema (aka Hindi Cinema) as the dominant media institution in India and an integral component of national cultural and social process (Dudrah 2006; Rai 2003; Virdi 2003; Kesavan 1994). Cultural theorist Vijay Mishra (2002) calls Hindi Cinema a decisive moment in the Indian encounter with modernity and Jyotika Virdi (2003) argues that it produces and circulates ideas of Indian national identity.

In this discussion I draw upon the narrative strategies of the 2006 Hindi Cinema's blockbuster *Fanaa* and examine the 'proper' role of Muslims in the Indian national narrative that it promotes. Interrogating the film's narrative strategies allows me to open a space for the following questions: What kinds of imagined communities does *Fanaa* promote? How are the borders of those communities regulated? To what extent does Hindu nationalism (Hindutva) play a central role in the film's narrative? How might Orientalism influence the construction of Muslim subjectivities in *Fanaa*? And finally, what insight does *Fanaa* provide about the contestation of gender, culture, nation and citizenship?

My analysis supports the view put forward by other scholars (Arora 1995; Rai 2003; Mishra 2002; Ganti 2004) who suggest that Hindi cinema endorses nationalist projects which centralize the ideal upper middle class Hindu male and mark the Muslim man as the sexualized violent other. I argue that the role of the Muslim woman frequently centers on that of regulating her man either by domesticating him or by killing him. In neutralizing his sexualized and violent threat she makes space for herself within the nation as a depoliticized citizen. My analysis contributes to the growing scholarship about the anti-Islam bias in Hindi Cinema with implications, I maintain, not only in the Indian context in which the films are

produced, but also the transnational arena where they are circulated. I maintain that such cinematic strategies have the potential to serve as a form of soft power within the region and beyond. First a few words about the *Fanaa's* narrative.

Fanaa: the story

The film opens with Zooni Ali Beg, a young blind Kashmiri Muslim woman saluting the Indian flag to the words of a nationalist poem. Zooni lives in an undisclosed location in Indian Kashmir along with her parents, Zulfikar and Nafisa Ali Beg. Zulfikar's profession in life is unclear, he spends much of the time either reciting poetry and reminiscing about the past or drinking. Early in the narrative, Zulficar comments that 'it is easy to choose between good and evil but much more difficult to choose between the lesser of two evils', a comment which sets the stage for the drama that enfolds in *Fanaa.*

As part of a dance troupe, Zooni travels to Delhi in order to participate in the 26 January Republic Day celebrations. In Delhi, she meets Rehan Khan (thereafter Khan), the troupe's tour guide, who romances her. Despite the advice of her friend who points out that Khan is a Casanova, the two spend considerable time reciting poetry to each other as well as verses from popular Indian film songs. After the requisite song and dance numbers they fall in love, although there is some suggestion that Khan is struggling against his feelings for Zooni. They spend the night together and plan to marry after her parents arrive from Kashmir. Meanwhile an experimental operation miraculously restores Zooni's sight. Before she is able to see her lover's face however, he is assumed to have been killed in a terrorist attack. His blown up body is unrecognizable. Thus ends the romantic first half of the film which has introduced us to the Muslim male protagonist, Khan the Casanova, and to poetry reciting Zulfikar, also a Muslim.

After the intermission we learn that Rehan Khan did not die in the terrorist attack, he perpetrated it. In the second half of the film he is reinvented as Rehan Qadri (thereafter Qadri), a terrorist, who, along with his grandfather, is involved in a plot to use the threat of a nuclear attack to pressure both India and Pakistan to allow the emergence of an independent state of Kashmir. In the process of stealing a trigger which can detonate the device and thus provide more teeth to their threat, Qadri is wounded and ends up at Zooni's door looking for help. Zooni, of course, does not recognize him as her sight was restored after his presumed death and when his body had been shattered beyond recognition. Qadri meanwhile comes to know that he has a 6 year old son and is increasingly drawn back by the force of his love for Zooni, and his son, into wanting a life with them. He decides that he will complete his current mission and then settle down to a family life. Unable to talk him out of his mission, Zooni has to choose between the possibility of a nuclear bomb detonation or the death of the man she loves. She remembers her father's advice, chooses the lesser of the two evils and kills Qadri. This then is a brief synopsis of *Fanaa's* storyline. I now turn to how Sufism and Hindutva influence narrative strategies in *Fanaa.*

Sufism, Hindutva and Hindi cinema: narrative strategies in *Fanaa*

Several narrative strategies in *Fanaa* suggest the terms under which Muslims are offered space as citizens in the Indian nation. First, *fanaa* itself is a sufi word. Through a state of *fanaa,* the individual enters a state of non-existence and is in complete unity with Allah, a process which destroys the ego. *Fanaa* is thus a state attained by denying physicality and the delights of the world while achieving spiritual extension and annihilation in Allah. In more populist interpretations, the term *fanaa* takes on a double meaning: physical destruction through love of not only Allah but also of an earthly beloved. The repetition in the film of the poetic verse '*Teray pyar main meray sansh ko panah mil jayae. Teray ishque main mere jan fanaa ho jayae*' (May my soul find refuge in your love. May I be destroyed in love for you) helps frame the action that follows.

Destruction of physicality, as I will show, appears to be a condition of citizenship for Muslims, particularly Muslim men, in *Fanaa*. At the same time, I argue the film's narrative articulates nationalism as it promotes the upper class and caste Hindu as an ideal citizen and marginalizes those marked by religious difference. Moreover the Hindu characters in *Fanaa* work in the background to ensure that the main male players in the plot, all of who are Muslim, are regulated and neutralized. The Muslim woman is recruited in this task and her agency is co-opted in the service of dominant nationalist visions.

Strategic use of nationalism suggests a second strategy. Cultural theorists (Banaji 2006; Nandy 1998) have noted that notions of patriarchy, heteronormativity and individual class struggles in Hindi Cinema overlap with social constructions of religious difference identified in communal terms. Moreover in recent years, Indian nationalism has created a linear narrative of Hindu supremacy, Hindutva, covering up the fractious nature of Indian history (Mishra 2002; Rai 2003). Vijay Mishra (1985) has identified the famous Hindu epics, *Mahabarata* and *Ramyana*, as the two foundational texts of Hindi film. The cinematic narratives and symbols constantly borrow and interpret from, as well as read, values of globalized capitalism into these authoritative texts. Increasing use of Hindu iconography and rituals helps bind viewers to a particular vision of Indianness (read as Hindu) and excludes others (Fazila-Yacoobali 2002; Viswanath 2002). Hindutva frequently enters into an oppositional stance with Islam and is defined in non-secular terms rendering it an eruption of the religious in a secular state. The ways in which the Muslim minority is articulated in Hindi cinema and the country's relationship with its predominately Muslim neighbour Pakistan, mark crucial components of this uneasy and complex process. The Muslim rule of India, the partition of British India into the nation states of India and Pakistan and the ongoing insurgency in Kashmir, serve to remind supporters of Hindutva that the subjugation of Muslims is central to the realization of their utopia. At the same time cinematic narratives use seminal events to over-determine Muslim communities as a terrorist threat from within. Socially constructed notions of religious communities juxtapose a monolithic, victimized, Hindu identity against a villainous Muslim one (Chowdhry 2000), the latter seen as a transplant and an invader (Ludden 1996).

Zooni's blindness and nationalism situate her as a safe insider; this is highlighted in the opening shots of the film as she salutes the Indian flag. Unable to see, Zooni misdirects her salutation away from the Indian flag; eliciting laughter from the school children singing the nationalistic song '*Saray Jehan say acha hai Hindustan hamara*' (Our Hindustan [India] is the best of all places in the world). Her mother gently redirects her body and nationalism towards the Indian flag, suggesting a role for Muslim parents in the process of serving the nation. As her mother redirects the visually challenged Zooni towards nationalism so the film directs the agency of post-operation Zooni, when she can see, to service the dominant nationalist culture. Such a culture, as post-colonial theorists (Clammer 2005; Bhabha 1994; Appadurai 1996) remind us, is not a given, it is negotiated, constructed and employs power-based discursive strategies (Said 1978).

In another context, Mahmood Mamdani (2004) has spoken about the distinction between the depoliticized good Muslim and the bad fanatical one who challenges the status quo. These comments suggest a third strategy in *Fanaa*. The bad Muslim challenges the Indian nation while the good one defends it and, by association, the Hindutva project. Even before the events of September 11, the Muslim character in Hindi cinema was marked by lecherous behaviour, a high sexual appetite, a life of luxury and religious fanaticism (Srivastava 2006). He is also a decadent aristocrat (Arora 1995) and a relic of the past (Ahmed 1992). Narratives about the Muslim man's heightened and out of control sexuality are mobilized to describe Khan, who is introduced to us in Delhi; he is an outrageously posturing flirt. Moreover Zooni's father, Zulfikar, spends his time drinking and reciting poetry and appears as a relic of the past. As such they are harmless acceptable Indians who can be relegated to the margins.

The bad Muslim also appears in Hindi films. He is frequently a violent terrorist usually associated with foreign powers – read as Pakistan (Mishra 2002; Rai 2003). We encounter him immediately after the intermission when the tone of *Fanaa's* story has darkened–suggesting the more violent side of the Muslim man's nature. Khan is resurrected as Qadri and we find him at an airport in a scene filmed in Kuala Lampur, Malaysia. His manner of dress and walk are reminiscent of actor Tom Cruise in the Hollywood film *Mission Impossible*. Terrorism and violence now emerge as central themes in the remaining narrative. The reasons for the Muslim man's rage, however, are largely personal and one-dimensional while the systemic nature of discrimination against his community in India is denied. As Qadri and his grandfather struggle for Kashmiri independence, they are situated as politicized bad Muslims. Such cinematic connection between violence and communal politics has intensified in Hindi Cinema in recent years. Notions of the ultra virile Muslim man and over fertile Muslim woman generate and reinforce fear and revenge, both on and off the screen (Sarkar 2002).

The Indian state is complicit in these processes as it has a major role in shaping Hindi cinema as a cultural institution through programs and policies, including those dealing with censorship and taxation (Banaji 2006; Vasudevan 1996). Such processes have accompanied the formal recognition of cinema as an industry in India, a recognition with important consequences. Film-makers can now take out bank loans for film projects instead of turning to, as some argue, organized crime for venture capital. The rise to

power of the Bharatiya Janata Party in the 1990s and its formation of the government in 1996 has also coincided with an emphasis on its vision of 'family values' translating into cinematic narratives of family socials and Hindu rituals (Ganti 2004).

While Muslims have historically made up a significant segment of the film industry, their ability to influence the industry has been uneven. In earlier years film super stars such as Nargis graced the silver screen. Other successful Muslim stars such as Nimmi, Dilip Kumar, Madhubala and Meena Kumari however felt the need to Hinduize their screen names, a gesture which speaks volumes about the terms under which Muslims are included, both within the nation and its premier culture industry – cinema. Muslims are frequently presented as a threat in Hindi cinema both internal, as in *Fiza,* and in complicity with external enemies as in *Mission Kashmir* and *Roja*. Moreover communal violence between Hindus and Muslims is rarely depicted through Bollywood films. In the few instances where it is depicted such as, *Mr. and Mrs. Iyer* (2002) and *Bombay* (1995), the script resorts to a liberal framework where we are presented with two sides to the tragedy. Such a view distorts the power difference between the two groups most frequently embroiled in communal violence: Hindus and Muslims. Research suggests it has been Hindus who have frequently committed violence with the complicit help of the state (AI 2005; Fazila-Yakoobali. 2002; HRW 2004). The recent film *Parzania* (2005) goes further than any Bombay film in its depiction of the recent violence against Muslims in Gujarat. Yet, despite the fact that the majority of the victims of the Gujarat violence were Muslims, the film's central characters are a Parsi family. Moreover, it ends on a positive note when it states that the government was voted out of office. The government the film makes reference to is the central government of India. Yet many observers believe that the state government of Narendra Modi was complicit in this violence (Engineer 2005; HRW 2002) and Modi was voted back into power.

Gender is an important aspect of the cinematic narratives. Female characters combine devotion drawn from authoritative devotional texts, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, with assertive behavior. Nikhat Kazmi (1998) has identified the Madhuri Dixit character as representative of a woman who successfully integrates the seemingly impossible contradictions of smart and simple, sensuous and shy, aggressive and malleable, intelligent yet vulnerable. Moreover, Banaji (2006) notes that the ideal female is frequently depicted as Hindu, heterosexual, under control, chaste, respectful and dependent on patriarchal authority, while the sexuality of marginalized groups is potent, deviant, disrespectful, and dangerous. The Muslim female in particular is frequently presented as veiled and more rigidly controlled by her community than the normal Indian one [read as Hindu] (Kesavan 1994). At the same time her veil is erotically charged by both concealing and revealing the body (Dwyer and Patel 2002). In the background looms a central motif of Hindi cinema, the figure of the *tawaif* (courtesan) whose singing and dancing delighted the Muslim nobility of old, and who now entertains mass audiences on the celluloid screen. The sensuous Muslim woman Zeenat, played by Lara Dutta in a cameo role, is the seductress in *Fanaa* who takes on the

attributes of the *tawaif*. Zeenat has seduced Rehan in the past and is ready for love again. With her oversexualized body Zeenat appears beyond redemption and we do not hear from her again. Muslim Zooni's unveiled and unchaperoned body, on the other hand is redeemable. She is chaste and embodies some of the contradictions of sexuality and innocence that Kazmi (1998) has identified for the ideal Indian female. Further, unlike the disreputable performances of the *tawaif*, Zooni's singing and dancing at Indian Independence Day celebrations are respectable moments in the service of nationalism.

Zooni's character continues to draw on dominant nationalist themes when she links the fate of Kashmir to that of India during the 26 January Republic Day celebrations in Delhi. She misquotes the seventeenth century Mughal Emperor Shahjehan when she attributes to him a famous phrase of his father Jahangir. The latter, speaking of Kashmir, pointed out, 'If there is paradise on earth it is here, it is here, it is here.' Zooni notes that these comments can be applied not just to Kashmir but also to all of India. Such nationalist optimism is certainly supported by those who identify India as a rising economic power (Steigerwald 2007; Zakaria 2006). Other voices challenge the view of India as a paradise however and speak to the growing inequalities connected to India's neo-liberal policies. They point to the failed green revolution (Ghosh 2008) and to thousands of farmers who commit suicide each year because of their increased indebtedness (Sharma 2004). Moreover the view of India as paradise is certainly not applicable to Indian Kashmir where much of the story unfolds.

A brief overview of the Kashmir conflict is presented in the film to contextualize the shift to a darker narrative – but little is offered regarding the complexities of the situation. Largely absent from the story is an account of the on-going insurgency in Kashmir which has killed and maimed tens of thousands at the hands of the insurgents groups, many of whom it is believed are backed by Pakistan. They are challenged by an equally vicious Indian army which, Humra Quraishi (2004) points out, acts like an occupying force in Kashmir. There are checkpoints everywhere and people are forced to submit to strip searches, made more humiliating by the fact that even Kashmiri women are searched by males. Moreover, as Akihla Raman notes (2008), the human rights record of the Indian security forces in Kashmir has been characterized by arbitrary arrests, torture, rape and extrajudicial killings, and many of these violations routinely go unchecked and unpunished. Human Rights Watch (HRW 2006) has documented many of these excesses both by what it calls an abusive Indian army as well as by the militant groups.

In *Fanaa's* version of the situation in Kashmir, Qadri and the group he belongs to, appear to be the only wrinkle in the idyllic life of the Beg family. The decades of conflict which has destroyed much of the state infrastructure, as well as the violence and human rights abuses (a feature of everyday life in large parts of the state) are alarmingly missing. Perhaps the lack of security is the reason that many of the Kashmiri segments of the film were shot in Poland.

Absence of an insight into systemic and state violence in Kashmir deflects audience attention from any need for systemic change. This brings us to a fourth strategy. The conflict in the *Fanaa* is personalized and

reduced to the diabolical actions of a few misguided terrorists. Indeed it is personal misguidedness which is identified as the cause of Qadri's anger, rendering his challenges to the state largely one-dimensional. The cinematic narrative leads us to the only conclusion possible. Qadri is a dangerous insider – the bad Muslim that Mamdani (2004) identifies – who brings Islamic religious nationalism into the public sphere. As such he challenges the dominant version of nationalism, Hindutava, and its secular face in the state, and must be brought under control.

Fanaa serves as a metaphor for social inclusion of Muslims into the Indian nation. For the Muslim man this entails the destruction of his physical body and achieving a state of transcendence, while the Muslim women can achieve inclusion by facilitating the process which destroys the Muslim man. In sacrificing her man at the nationalist alter, the Muslim female is offered a space in contemporary India. In effect the Muslim man, Qadri, cannot be redeemed, suggesting once again the dominance of Hindu heteronormativity. On the other hand, Zooni, the Muslim woman, appears redeemable.

In another context, Laura Mulvey (1975) has noted that the film heroine is the bearer of the look which serves to identify her body as the object of the male gaze. Mulvey's comments have considerable relevance for Hindi films where female bodies are frequently sexualized as spectacles to behold and to endorse products (Lal 1998). Centralizing the patriarchal values of the middle class Hindu family (Prasad 1998), Hindi Cinema also invokes the decline of 'family values, [as it] promotes its own brand of traditionalism–"tradition with a modern face"' (Virdi 2003:192). Films establish the moral credentials of female characters as they reassert patriarchal authority, seeking to subordinate women within the patriarchal family (Bhachu 2002; Bhatia 1998). At the same time, women are offered to the audience as erotic objects in song and dance sequences. There is a mismatch in Bombay cinema, however, between this display of female bodies on the screen and notions of propriety which include a ban on kissing. The female protagonist is well educated, and a range of vocational fields are open to her. Yet her mobility is largely restricted, and her lifestyle choices are curtailed. In her choice of a life partner she submits to familial authority – usually vested in a male. Patriarchal permission is required for the ideal marriage: 'the arranged love marriage' in narratives which perpetuate the myth of true love (Mishra 2002). Transgressive women are punished for not following the social rules. They are either killed off or they convert and become good women, either by submitting to patriarchal authority or to a divine one (Virdi 2003).

Zooni, the female protagonist in *Fanaa,* is played by the radiant Kajol who returned to the screen after a six year sabbatical in which she married and had a child. Coming from a family which included film producers and actresses, Kajol is a Bombay Cinema icon. In *Fanaa,* she is presented to the audience as rain soaked erotica, one who has a child out of wedlock. By Bombay Cinema standards, Zooni should have been punished for her sexual transgressions. In annihilating her physical desires in the service of nationalism however, she reclaims her virtue and finds redemption. Through the process of redemption, she submits to at least two levels of patriarchy: the state which demands personal sacrifice in the services of

nationalism; and her father who instills in her the importance, as well as the difficulty, of choosing the lesser of two evils. Zooni sacrifices her earthly love (Khan/Qadri) for a transcendent one. She is guided by the often repeated phrase in the film: '*Teray pyar main meray sansh ko panah mil jayae. Teray ishque main mere jan fanaa ho jayae*' (May my soul find refuge in your love. May I be destroyed in love for you). However her soul finds refuge in love not for Qadri, or even for Allah, but for the nation.

Elsewhere Amit Rai (2003) has identified cine-patriotism as a tactic through which the upper class and upper caste Hindu Indian, controls and destroys the outsider, the threat. In *Fanaa* cine-patriotism functions as a fifth strategy. The upper class Hindu, Malini Tiyagi, a psychologist working with the Anti Terrorist Unit, is not secure in her position as part of the dominant group. Her gender makes her vulnerable to the sexism of her colleagues, who trivialize her contributions in the narrative. Nevertheless Tiyagi, played by the Muslim actress Tabu, gives advice and strength via satellite radio to Zooni and recruits her into the service of nationalism. Unable to neutralize Qadri and talk him out of his mission, Zooni sacrifices an earthly existence with Qadri for a larger cause, her nationalist love for India. In so doing she creates a space for herself and her son as depoliticized good Muslims within the nationalist space of India.

At the end of the film all four Muslim men are dead. Rehan Khan, the depoliticized and harmless good Muslim, dies an apparent death in an explosion in the first half of the film. Zulfikar Ali Beg, another harmless depoliticized good Muslim, is killed while struggling with Qadri. The politicized bad Muslims are killed as well; Qadri, a well trained terrorist, allows Zooni to kill him and the Indian Anti-terrorist unit shoots down Qadri's grandfather. The death of the good as well as bad Muslim men suggests that the only acceptable Muslim man in the increasingly nationalist India is a dead one. Their deaths leave us questioning about the ability of Zooni's son to have a space in India as a male Muslim adult. Moreover, Zooni's nationalist virtue does not propel her to a new life as an active member of the Indian polity. Instead, in the final clip of the film, we see her offering prayers at the grave of her departed beloved, suggesting that her future in the national imaginary is one of homage to the dead and the past (perhaps a throwback to days when Muslims ruled large parts of India).

On the Production and Reception of *Fanaa*

Rosie Thomas (1989) has pointed to the ways in which the star persona is implicated in the reading of a film by Indian audiences. Referring to the film *Mother India,* released in 1957, Thomas argues that the persona of the Bombay cinema star Nargis, which also drew upon gossip and rumor, coincided with the cinematic narrative to produce audience reception of the film. Drawing upon Thomas's insights I point to the likely importance of the persona of Hindi cinema icon Aamir Khan, who plays the double role of Khan/Qadri, in an audience reading of *Fanaa*. Actor and director Aamir has appeared in both mainstream films such as *Dil Chatha Ha,* as well as in some cutting edge films including *Lagaan* (2001) – a film in which cricket is used to critique India's colonial past, and *Rang De Basanti* (2006) – a film about the political awakening of youth. His more critical work has been provocative and challenged the status quo, something

clearly *Fanaa* does not do. Although Aamir is known as something of a perfectionist in the industry, his keen eye did not catch the historical statements misattributed to the Emperor Shahjehan in *Fanaa*. Incidentally, Aamir is also a descendent of Mawlana Abul Kalam Azad, a Muslim scholar and senior political leader of the Indian independence movement. Azad supported Hindu-Muslim unity and opposed the division of British India on communal lines. Aamir appears to have gone one step further and notes during a recent interview, that he is not Hindu, Muslim or Sikh but that he is an Indian (*Times of India* 2006). Despite the fact that *Fanaa* presents a stereotypical view of the Kashmir dispute and of Muslims in general, the film was banned in Gujarat because of Aamir's criticism of the state government over its continued commitment to construct the controversial Narmada dam, which threatens to displace tens of thousands of people and do untold environmental damage. Although Aamir critiques class and imperialism through his work he does not appear to speak to the racialization of Muslims in India. Perhaps such a critique might threaten his iconic status in the Hindi film industry.

Released in 2006, *Fanaa* was produced by Yash Raj films. Kunal Kohli, who directed the film, originally shot music videos for such stars as Bally Sagoo and Bali Brahmabhatt. Kohli began to direct films under the Yash Raj banner in 2002 and his second film for this studio, *Hum Tum,* won many awards in 2004. The power behind Yash Raj films is Yash Chopra, one of India's most successful film producers, with a career spanning over fifty years. *Fanaa*, like many of his films, is largely focused on romance and set against beautiful landscapes including lakes, rivers and snow-capped mountains.

Many critics have challenged *Fanaa's* disjoined narrative and a weak script (Deoshi 2006; Sen 2006). It was however well-received by others who pointed to a 'richly layered … fast paced … gripping narrative' (Search India 2008). Despite the contradictory reviews, the audience loved it and *Fanaa* became a box office hit. Made on a budget of 220 million rupees (US $5,700,000.), the film has collected over 1 billion rupees in revenues (US$25,900,000.) including 320 million rupees (US$8,290,000.) in overseas screening (Bhandari 2007). Shortly after its release in 2006, on the May 30 weekend, in the US alone, it grossed almost US $880,000. By June 6th, *Fanaa* was listed among the top ten money generators in the North American market. Certainly, by all accounts, *Fanaa* is a hugely popular and influential film for cinema-goers, including its diasporic audience in North America where it functions as a transnational cultural product.

Hindi Cinema as transnational product

Globalization has brought about an increase in transnational commodification of culture and opened up new avenues of dissemination. Hindi cinema, which constitutes the second largest film industry in the world, has also been influenced by such processes for we are witnessing a globalized cultural economy of Indian film networks and video piracy through which films are subtitled, dubbed and distributed world wide. Although Bombay films are grounded in national and regional contestations, they also project the politics of the homeland outward to diasporic South Asian audiences which have become a major targeted market. Further, there is

increasing mainstreaming of Hindi Cinema in both North America and Britain. Thus the hetero-normative Hindu male, upper middle class subject who is, some (Rai 2003; Fazila-Yakoobali 2002) note, part of an anti-Islamic cinematic narrative, is being screened in North America at an escalating pace. These cinematic constructions do not occur in a vacuum. In the North American diasporic space, such constructions overlap with Hollywood's patriarchal construction of gender and sexuality (Stam 2000; Doane 2000) and Orientalist views of Muslims (Shohat 2006; Shaheen 2001; Said 1978). Particularly, the latter have increased in intensity and frequency since September 11. Such cinematic determinations risk reinforcing the trauma of separation and dislocation which South Asian minorities, like other racialized people, face in North America (Ali 1993; Bannerjee 2000; Agnew, 2005). Films play a pivotal role in the cultural politics of transnational South Asian communities (Mishra 2002), and bring a bit of home to immigrant communities (Sardar 1998). At the same time they provide a life line for the communities' cultural survival. While South Asians in the subcontinent have a variety of cultural influences as well as sources for information, in the diaspora, cinema remains a major authority of images and messages about the homeland (Mishra 1985; Desai 2004). Arjun Appadurai (1996) has noted that these processes are part of a new global cultural economy, marked by an intensity of transcultural and transnational interactions. Audience responses to these messages have yet to be determined.

Conclusion

Fanaa is a nationalist film which reaffirms the boundaries of the nation and citizenship. At the same time it allows for a wider conversation about the options available to Muslim citizens in contemporary India. Although Orientalist images of Muslims, which depict them as both violent and sexual, are common in Western media (Said 1981) including in Hollywood films (Shaheen 2001), they also appear to be operating in *Fanaa*. We are presented with what appears to be both shades of Orientalism: decadence and sexual promiscuity as well as an irrationality and violent terrorist activity. The extent to which such views are articulated in other Hindi films, or through Indian media in general, is beyond the scope of this paper but is an important area for future investigation. In addition to the stereotypical views of Muslims, a simplistic rendering of the Kashmiri Muslim terrorist versus benign Indian state reduces the complexities of the Kashmiri conflict, denying the years of what many consider to be Indian occupation of that state. Instead, we are presented with a Casanova-turned-terrorist Muslim male who is threatening the Indian nation. Disability also serves as a symbolic marker. The blind female protagonist Zooni undergoes a surgical procedure which restores her sight. Her new-found vision and agency are recruited to neutralize Khan/Qadri and thus create a space for herself and for her son within the Indian nation. As such, she joins other Muslim heroines in Bollywood in neutralizing the dangerous and undesirable Muslim man either by killing him as in *Fiza* (2005) or domesticating him as in *Mission Kashmir* (2000) and *Sarfarosh* (1999). While a minor, Zooni's son is a safe 'good Muslim'. Yet if we are to take *Fanaa's*

narrative seriously, as he grows up he will likely be seen as a threat that must be neutralized.

The kinds of latent meanings produced by *Fanaa* situate Muslims within current versions of dominant Indian nationalism, authorizing particular ideologies. Drawing upon sufi Muslim notions of desire and annihilation of physicality, the film relocates them to service Indian nationalism. In the process, destruction of the physical body in and for Allah is substituted by destruction of self for the nation. Notions of overpowering love and liberal use of romantic Urdu poetry bind the narrative together and stereotypes of Muslims as sexual and violent other help suture spectators into this vision.

In another context Mulvey (1975) has argued that the spectator identifies with the male protagonist and through this identification is able to have access to the heroine – the object of desire both within the story and for the audience. I argue that in *Fanaa* the spectator's identification with the protagonist Khan/Qadri might be fraught with tension, danger and fear. As Khan/Qadri is both overtly sexual and violent, he is a danger to the nation's social and political order. Yet the film's popularity suggests that the symbolic danger the narrative poses and the tension it generates has, to a large extent, been resolved. Nationalism points the way to safety and sufism blesses the proceedings. As he annihilates himself in his love for the nationalist Zooni, the danger Qadri poses is neutralized and the tension in the narrative resolved. Moreover, his death does not preclude a happy ending. As Qadri will, through death, achieve union with the radiant Zooni and live in her heart for ever, so too will the spectator. Indeed we see her, along with their son, offering prayers at his grave suggesting that the couple's love will continue even with his physical death.

Fanaa's cinematic narrative presents the Muslim man in ways that reaffirm violence and sexuality as both sides of a coin which appears influenced by Orientalism. As the narrative unfolds it neutralizes his violence and renders his overt sexuality and revolutionary politics impotent. While there is no room for Muslim men, either the politicized bad ones or the depoliticized good ones, there is hope for the Muslim women. In allowing her body and agency to service the needs of the state, increasingly defined in Hindutva terms, she can create space for herself within the nation. Her choices challenge Muslim patriarchies and channel her submission to Hindutva patriarchies.

In another context, Stuart Hall (1997) reminds us of the importance of culture as a crucial site of political contestation and power play. Hall's comments are certainly valid when speaking of Hindi cinema. As a cultural product, Bombay cinema is important in the lives of South Asians in the Indian subcontinent and in the diaspora. At the same time, the cinematic imagination helps produce, sustain and circulate hierarchies based on communalism, caste and gender. As India moves away from the Nehruvian socialist ideals towards a neo-liberal economy, these hierarchies influence how material and symbolic rewards are awarded in society. *Fanaa* identifies the terms under which Muslims, as racialized minorities, are offered citizenship and challenges the secular democratic goals of the Indian state.

I would like to conclude with the following statement. Narrative strategies of Bombay Cinema identify intense cultural contestation about the current forms of national narratives and under what terms various subjects will be granted citizenship. The increasing dominance of Hindutva ideologies through cinema, and their naturalization of hierarchies as routine, every day practices, speaks to a form of soft power that radiates from India outwards through film distribution networks and video piracy. Increasingly such cinematic hierarchies travel with the circulation of Hindi cinema around the globe. In Euro-America, they overlap with stereotypes already circulating about Muslims. The immense popularity of *Fanaa* suggests a certain acceptance of these stereotypes among audience and identifies an area for future investigation.

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Animation in South Asia

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Abstract

Until recently, South Asian animation has lagged far behind that of other parts of Asia for lack of the technological, financial, and personnel infrastructure. This is still the situation in most of the region, with India an exception. What has happened in the development of Indian animation since the mid-1990s is phenomenal. By 2007, India had about 300 animation studios, and by 2010, the country's animation industry was expected to hover around US$ one billion. Increasingly, Bollywood has taken a keen interest in Indian animation, as have foreign studios, including Disney. Based on interviews and a thorough review of secondary sources, this article traces the history of Indian filmic cartoons from 1915 to the present, discussing reasons for the lag in development previously and the tremendous surge in the 21st Century. The limited amount of animation production in Nepal and Sri Lanka is also discussed.

Keywords

Asian animation industry
International animation
Disney
Ram Mohan

Until recently, South Asia did not figure prominently in animation, either as an industry or art form. Perhaps, this stemmed from the regional dominance of Japan, South Korea, China, and Taiwan (East Asia), especially in overseas production for North American and European clients, but also in domestic animation filmmaking. South Asian countries did not have the technological, financial, or personnel infrastructure to engage in the international offshore animation industry. Furthermore, domestic animation films, of which there were some excellent examples, were not taken very seriously; in most instances, they were considered for children only. No doubt local animation's importance was also overshadowed by the gargantuan Indian film industry. As animation historian Giannalberto Bendazzi wrote, 'in comparison with live-action productions, Indian animation is as a pygmy to a giant, the one hour yearly total of television series or educational shorts by the Films Division just a speck next to the 800–900 live action features released in the same period of time' (Bendazzi 1994: 407).

In the case of India, earth-shaking changes have occurred since the mid-1990s: foreign animation houses began to use inexpensive Indian labor pools; Indian television channels proliferated and demanded much more programming fare, which animation, in part, provided; parts of the country became major cogs in the world computer industry, and computer expertise among Indians grew; and many new studios and training centers sprouted. The rest of South Asia has been rather stagnant in its appreciation and production of animation.

Figure 1: From Nuzhat Shahzadi and Ram Mohan's Sare, Daughter of the Lioness. *Courtesy of Jayanti Sen. © Ram Mohan & Nuzhat Shahzadi.*

Historical Overview

Asian animation started in India when, in 1915, the father of Indian cinema, Dhundiraj Govind Phalke, produced three shorts – *Agkadyanchi Mouj*/Matchsticks Fun (1917), *Laxmicha Galicha*/Animated Coins (1916), and *Vichitra Shilpa*/Inanimate Animated (1925)). Phalke was pressed to make shorter works (including documentaries) than feature films when the war in Europe deterred importation of materials, including film stock (Ramachandran 1985: 40–41). His animation predated other early Asian cartoon efforts, such as those by Japan's Oten Shimokawa, Jun-ichi Kouchi, and Seitaro Kitayama (all produced in 1917) (Tsugata 2003) and the four Wan brothers in early 1920s China (Lent and Xu 2003).

After Phalke's stopgap venture, animation production in India was unheard of until 1934, the year mistakenly credited with being the medium's birth date when Gunamoy Banerjee created, and New Theatres in Kolkata produced, *Pea Brothers*. The less than five-minute cartoon showed a pea bursting to release toy-like figures that played together (Piyushroy 2008). That same year, the first Indian animated film with a soundtrack, *On a Moonlit Night*, was released; it was made by R. C. Boral, a composer and orchestra leader with New Theatres.

A few other works followed *On a Moonlit Night*, but with no regularity or consistency. Among these were: *Lafanga Langoor*/the adventures of a funny monkey (1935), produced by Mohan Bhavnani; *Superman Myth* (1939), directed by G. K. Gokhale and produced by Indian Cartoon Pictures, and *Cinema Kadamban* (1947), supervised by cartoonist N. Thanu. Because Indian animation history is a virgin field of research, it is likely other film cartoons and animators existed and will surface once archives, memoirs, and other research depositories are more closely scrutinized. The existence of the Mumbai-based Indian Cartoon Pictures in the late 1930s indicates there must have been other productions, and probably other studios. For example, famed political cartoonist R. K. Laxman related that after World War II and before he joined *Times of India* in 1947, he had worked in a Madras animation studio. Laxman decried the inane humor in one particular cartoon with which he was associated while employed there (Laxman 1998: 66–72).

Continuous animation production began in 1956, with the opening of the Cartoon Film Unit, placed in the Films Division, Ministry of Information. From the outset, the unit was meant to produce animated films 'in support of community development programmes such as rural health and hygiene, development of fisheries, personal savings plans, the metric system and other concerns' (Kenyon 2001: 226).

The Cartoon Film Unit's startup was aided by outside support from UNESCO, the United States International Cooperation Administration, and Hollywood studios that donated cels and cameras. Clair H. Weeks, an animator at Walt Disney Feature Animation, joined the unit to provide training. According to his widow, Elinor, Weeks was born in Mysore of missionary parents and was pleased to return to India in 1956 for a three-year training assignment. 'It was a wonderful time, and we loved Bombay,' she said, adding, 'Clair didn't want to come home'. Weeks carried out similar training and production stints in Nepal for five years, New Delhi for two years, and Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand (Weeks 1998; see Barnouw and Krishnaswamy 1980: 200).

Weeks worked side by side with veteran Indian animator G. K. Gokhale, both in training and production. Together, they made the unit's first work, *Banyan Tree* (1957), which emanated from a Buddhist Janaka story. Gokhale stayed with the unit until 1974, when he began to freelance. His major works were *Tandava*, about the god Shiva; *Homo Saps* (1966), and *Chaos* (1969), both environment-themed animation.

Among the unit's first group of trainees was Ram Mohan, who went on to become India's most important animation figure. He remembered:

> There were 12 of us novices who had no experience in animation, and three senior people who were essentially self-taught. We felt particularly privileged to be under the tutelage of a veteran Disney animator.
>
> (Mohan 1998)

Mohan acknowledged the strong Disney impact, courtesy of Weeks, on the unit's productions, particularly *Banyan Tree*:

> There was much talk of evolving a uniquely Indian visual style for the film and we went to the famous Ajanta caves to gather references by studying the frescoes that depicted Buddhist themes. [Because of Weeks' influence] The *Banyan Tree* turned out to be not so much an incarnation of the Bodhisatva as that of *Bambi*!.
>
> (Mohan, 1998)

The Cartoon Film Unit released two short films yearly until 1962, when the number doubled. Most of the works dealt with educational and social welfare themes, such as *My Wise Daddy*, *Shadow and Substance*, or *Happy and Healthy*, but some were artistic and/or retold Hindu legends. The first of the latter type was *Radha and Krishna* (1958), based on a traditional Hindu legend and Pahari painting, and directed by Shanti Varma and Jehangir S. Bhownagary. Another director of art films in animated form was Pramod Pati, whose major productions were *Wives and Wives* (1962), *Trip* (1970), and *Abid* (1972).

Many prominent animators received their training at the Cartoon Film Unit. Besides Mohan, they included V. G. Samant, who excelled as scriptwriter, director, designer and animator at the unit before entering entertainment animation with *The Lion and the Rabbit* (1981); A. R. Sen, also multi-tasked, with animation credits for *Skin in the Bin* (1974), *The Thinker* (1981), and *Synthesis* (1974); and B. R. Shendge, who concentrated on educational/developmental films, such as *Umbrella* (1969, on family planning), *The Brahmin's Goat* (1976, on thinking for oneself), *Precious Water* (1980, on water pollution), *A Little Thought* (1981, on good manners), and *The Balloon* (1985, on dangers of rumor-mongering).

Still others were G. M. Saraiya, R. A. Shaikh, R. R. Swamy, V. K. Wankhede, Shaila Paralkar, and Rani D. Rurra. Paralkar, Rurra, and Nina Sabnani were among the few women animators at the time. Paralkar cooperated with Sen on *The Thinker*, a film that showed the metamorphoses of humans from living in caves to polluted cities. She also directed her own *Bottle Cannibals* (1978), dealing with anti-alcoholism, *Dosti*, and *The Last Drop* (1991). Rurra's important film was *Louse Story* (1977), a musical fable about a hard-working louse who defeats an evil king, while Sabnani taught animation and directed films at the National Institute of Design (Bendazzi 1994).

By the 1970s and 1980s, some independent production houses such as Ram Mohan Biographics and Climb Films opened, as did the already-mentioned National Institute of Design, utilized for formal animation training and production. Mohan started his studio in 1972 after working four years at Prasad Studio, a live-action feature film company in Madras that had invested in animation and needed someone to do the hands-on work. Climb Films, the first studio to specialize in computer animation, was founded by Bhimsain, a musician and producer-director of live-action feature films. His animated films included *The Climb*, winner of the Silver Hugo award at the 1970 Chicago International Film Festival; *The Fire* (1975); *Munni* (1976), on water conservation, and *Chalak Kauva* (1991) about enemies-turned-friends. Another producer of animation beginning in the late 1960s was the Family Planning Association of India, which used the services of Mohan as director of *Baap Re Baap* (1968), a no dialogue, no voiceover developmental film, and *Down to Earth*, comprised of four 10–12-minute modules dealing with environment, development, urbanization, and family planning. Produced in the early 1970s and dubbed into thirteen languages, the film is still used in schools (Kenyon 2001: 227).

During its formative years in the late 1970s-early 1980s, the National Institute of Design invited foreign animators Weeks, Roger Noake, and others to teach its staff of graphic designers and artists. Once the staff (I. S. Mathur and R. L. Mistry included) was taught, a two-year workshop program was created to recruit and train the new animation faculty, bringing in Sabnani and Binita Desai to form a four-member staff. In 1985–1986, a two and a half year advanced entry program and a condensed one-year scheme were added. All aspects of animation were taught (Sen 1989–1990: 13–16).

NID faculty and students have produced animated films on topics of family planning, energy, road safety, and dowry, as well as those with

artistic and literary themes. Among faculty works were the abstract *Perspectrum* and *National Highway* (1985), on road safety, both by Mistry, and *Cirrus Skies* (1984) on changing cloud formations and *Patang* (1984) about a kite and its flyer), both by Desai. Some student-animated films of that period were Prakash Moorthy's *Jungle King*, Anjan Ghosh's *Green Story*, and Jayanti Sen's *Inch by Inch*.

1990s and the surge

When I interviewed Ram Mohan in 1993, his studio, 'Ram Mohan Biographics' (one of the most important in India), operated out of cramped quarters limited by a small staff of trained animators. Mohan cited instances where jobs were lost because Indian studios could not deliver work on time. Nevertheless, he was optimistic about animation's future in India, pointing out that already three or four of the country's fifteen production houses were computerized, that a three-year diploma course in animation was planned for the Film and Television Institute in Pune, and that initial contacts with foreign animation clients had materialized (Mohan 1993). But what was to happen in Indian animation development from the mid-1990s until now, had to have been out of the imagination of even someone as upbeat as Mohan.

In the 1990s, production was accelerated as new companies came on the scene, mainly to serve overseas studios, initially through an abundance of inexpensive, English-speaking labor and a competitive cost of living, and later, with sophisticated computer software. The entire industry changed as a result, with Ram Mohan Biographics merging with United Studios Ltd. to form RM-USL in 1997, and later becoming UTV-Toons. Heart Entertainment allied with U.S.-based Star Toons the following year; with Zee Institute of Creative Arts employing its alumni as the training center switched to production, and with companies such as Silvertoon, Crest Communications, Pentafour (later, Pentamedia), and Toonz Animation India emerging as work-for-hire, digital ink and paint and compositing centers (Lent 2000: 31).

RM-USL's expansion in the late 1990s was considerable, increasing staff from 30 to 120 in one year, recruiting artists from the finest art schools and training them in animation on site, and making itself a financially competitive full service (from conceptualization through post production) house. The added space, equipment, and personnel allowed RM-USL to operate at four levels, according to Ram Mohan:

> (a) high quality animation for commercials, for which we have a separate team of animators, (b) high-end animation on subcontract for studios in Los Angeles, (c) low-end, low-budget, limited animation shows for local and Asian sponsors, and (d) in house productions for which RM-USL will try and market on its own.
>
> (Mohan 1998)

Drawing on its approximately 100 alumni, the Zee Institute of Creative Arts in Hyderabad, switched from animation training to production; its first assignment was an animated feature, *Bagmati*, based on the legendary love story of Quli Quib Shah and Bagmati. With the closing of its

three-year course, the National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad was the sole formal animation training center in the late 1990s.

The other major studios that developed in the 1990s were primarily engaged in subcontract work for U.S., French, British, and Japanese studios. The animation arm of software developer Silverline Technologies, Silvertooon, had 225 animators in 1998, with hopes to double its staff within a year. As with other studios at the time, Silvertoon faced a trained personnel problem. Also formidable as 2000 dawned were Pentafour and Toonz. Starting out as a Madras software and exports firm that did low-value-added jobs, such as fixing Y2K bugs, Pentafour transformed itself into a multimedia powerhouse concentrating on animation beginning in 1996. Between 1995–1999, income growth averaged 75 per cent annually, and by 1998, Pentafour could boast of being the third largest company in the world in revenue generated from animation, and of having the largest digital studio outside of Japan. Its 700 computer-literate animators worked on *Sinbad: Beyond the Veil of Mists*, as well as on films built around manga (see Beardmore 1998).

The well-financed Toonz Animation India, located on a 180-acre Techno park in the southernmost Trivandrum, opened in 1999 with an aim to make television series and feature-length films for international audiences and to act as an overseas service facility (its first client was the Cartoon Network) at prices 25 to 40 per cent less than other major Asian studios. Like RM-USL, Toonz planned from the outset to invest heavily in training, develop content from rich Indian folklore and mythology, and seek co-production arrangements.

As was the case in other parts of Asia, where the animation industry boomed in the 1990s, the pattern in India has been to establish work-for-hire studios to meet the rapidly-accelerated demands of western television channels and their audiences, and then, with the technology and skills attained, to begin making domestic films. But, unlike overseas providers such as South Korea and Taiwan, where subcontracting jobs diminished by the start of the new century, in India, they remained paramount. In 2006, for example, more than 70 per cent of India's animation revenue came from exports, with the major part of the animation workforce involved in outsourcing.

India, however, has the potential to excel in areas of animation production besides outsourcing. This should not come as a surprise as many necessary ingredients for efficient production of animation exist in India – the world's largest film industry; raw talent; an increasingly lucrative information industry; widespread use of the English language; an advantage in attracting foreign work from Europe and North America; a rich culture full of myths and tales waiting to be animated; low labor costs, and an entrepreneurial spirit. India also has as a potential animation audience, the largest percentage of children between ages 1 and 14 in the world (Ravichandran 2002). Possibly what encouraged some businesses to enter animation was the liberalization of Indian foreign trade in the 1990s, making it simpler to import the latest equipment and capital, and to export Indian films, including animation (Jokinen 2002: 47).

These factors drove animation growth at a break-neck pace so that by 2007, India had about 300 animation companies with a total workforce

of 12,000. Animation was expected to grow by 25–30 per cent yearly, reaching US$869 million by 2010, when it is expected to account for one-sixth of the total size of the Indian entertainment business. The National Association of Software and Service Companies (Nasscom) was more optimistic, claiming the animation industry would reach US$950 million by 2009, at an annual growth rate of 35 per cent. Nasscom estimated 300,000 animation professionals would be required by 2008 (see earlier figures by Jokinen 2002: 47; Ravichandran 2002; and Deneroff 2000: 19). The gaming industry, estimated at US$48 million at the beginning of 2007, was predicted to cross US$424 million by 2010, experiencing a 72 per cent growth rate over the intervening four years.

With large profits in sight, new cartoon production houses sprouted, established Bollywood film studios moved into animation, the number of co-productions with foreign companies increased, as did the number of animated films released.

Three studios established in 1998–1999 that have made an impact on the industry are Famous's House of Animation, Color Chips Ltd., and Toonz. Famous's, located in Mumbai and part of the long-established Famous Cine Labs and Studios, began by doing animated advertising, stations IDs, and public service announcements, initially for MTV and Channel [V]. The studio recruits staff from NID graduates. After producing a number of memorable claymation commercials for clients Amaron auto batteries, Smirnoff vodka, and Nissin's Top Ramen, Famous's began to make entertainment shorts, as well as provide production services (Deneroff 2003: 124–125; also see Bhatia 2007).

Color Chips Ltd., started in 1999, has become one of India's largest animation studios with both 2D and 3D capability. Located in Hyderabad, the company, started by former Hollywood animator Uttam P. Kumar, is a subsidiary of UBC Feature World, one of the biggest cartoon feature syndicates in India. Launched as an 'umbrella entity to carry out software development and animation,' Color Chips Ltd. entered animation on a global scale with a strength in Indianizing characters and contents (Gelman 2001: 16).

In fewer than three years after its 1999 start-up, Toonz evolved from a strictly 2D, work-for-hire business into a 2D/3D contract house with co-production deals with Canada, England and other countries, and a staff of more than 425 adapting Indian comics/cartoon strips into TV shows. The studio felt a need to change with the lessened number of overseas clients; thus, it adapted indigenous characters and stories and gave them an international twist. *The Adventures of Tenali Raman* was its first solely-made original series, followed by *Indigo Kids*. The Tenali Raman series was picked up for worldwide distribution (Nagel 2002: 28).

Also developing its own content while subcontracting for overseas studios is Bangalore-based Jadoo Works. The studio is unique in that it pledged at the outset to donate part of the company's revenues to feed hungry people of the city, using a modified van to deliver the food (Vogelsang 2002: 14).

Tie-ins with Bollywood, large corporations, and banks have become common in Indian animation. A-list Bollywood studios such as Yash Raj, Dharma Productions, and Adlabs have set up animation divisions. To take

advantage of already-made audiences, they are gearing up to animate film hits and use Bollywood film superstars such as Shah Rukh Khan (SRK), Akshay Kumar, Rajinikant, and others. Rajinikant's story was among the first such animated features. Called *Sultan – the Warrior*, it was produced by the actor's daughter, Soundarya Rajinikant, and her Ocher Studios. Other examples include, *Roadside Romeo* (2008) directed by the actor Jugal Hansraj and featuring the voices of film stars Saif Ali Khan, Kareena Kapoor, and Javed Jaffrey, while live action films such as *Hera Pheri and Phir Hera Pheri* (Firoz Nadiadwala), *Judwaa* (Sajid Nadiadwala), and *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (Karan Johar) were turned into animated features (Piyushroy 2008). Additionally, Bollywood producer-director Ravi Chopra has been making an animated feature based on the childhoods of the Padava brothers of ancient fame, while film-makers Singeetam Srinivasa Rao and Govind Nihalan directed the animated features *Ghotothkach – Master of Magic* and *Kamly*, respectively.

Why Bollywood's sudden interest in animation? Among reasons given are: the upgrading of the animation industry in technology, infrastructure, and talent pool; the attractions of animation's close links to profitable merchandise and gaming; the changing nature of audiences (animation is no longer only children's fare, see Ghosh 2008; Unnithan 2007), and the interest in animation taken by banks and other huge businesses (Iyer and Raghavendra 2007).

Large banks, particularly Export Import Bank of India (Exim), IDBI, Standard Chartered, and Yes Bank, have realized that animation has become a hot industry, having moved from 'sweat jobs to controlling intellectual property' (Iyer and Raghavendra 2007). Exim planned to finance animated television serials at one to two million rupees each and feature films at four million. By 2007, Exim had already made loans to the Hyderabad-located DQ Entertainment, as well as Maya Entertainment and Crest, and was expected to finance two films. IDBI, the leader in financing live action films, funded *Hanuman* (Percept Studio), and was expected to work with both Dharma Productions and B.R. Chopra. IDBI has been cautious about its involvement in animation production because of:

> the lack of control over the project which they feel lies in the animation lab, as well as uncertainty that there is enough draw of audience for this fare in India as of now. The lack of "stars" is also what makes this banker a bit wary, in a market which is very star led.
>
> (Iyer and Raghavendra 2007)

A senior official at IDBI explained that animation calls for bigger budgets and longer loan tenors (minimum of two years, whereas for commercial films, the loan tenor is a maximum of two years) (Iyer and Raghavendra 2007).

Though bankers think animation has strong growth potential, they also are careful in making investment decisions. For example, a Yes Bank senior vice president was concerned with the longer production time that animation requires, and Standard Chartered Bank, with the stability of animation studios it deals with, stipulating it will finance 'corporates with good governance norms' (Iyer and Raghavendra 2007).

Some studios are appendages of large corporations involved in multimedia, software and hardware technology, and other industries; among these are Toonz, part of the Geneva-based Comcraft Group, an international business conglomerate; Pentamedia; Crest, a subsidiary of Crest U.S.; Virgin Animation, and Big Animation. Virgin Animation is part of the British conglomerate, Virgin Group, owned by billionaire Richard Branson. In 2005, Virgin Group entered into a partnership with Gotham Entertainment Group, South Asia's leading comics publisher, film-maker Shekhar Kapur, and author Deepak Chopra to start up Virgin Animation in Bangalore and Virgin Comics in New York City. At the time, Virgin Group hoped the ten million pound deal would spark a 'creative renaissance' in India and lead to a worldwide phenomenon similar to that of Japanese anime and comics (Andrews 2007).

Big Animation in Pune is also part of a larger operation, Reliance Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group, previously not involved in animation or gaming. The studio was born in 2005 when Ashish Kulkarni's Ani Rights, an animation company in Bangalore, was bought by Anil D. Ambani. Ani Rights dealt mainly with offshore animation production. The new company, Reliance Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group, planned to start its own television stations, using the studio as a hub for television animation. Big Animation had a staff of 610 employees in 2008, expected to double the following year, and high-level studio facilities and equipment. Kulkarni chose Pune as his studio site, not wanting his artists to 'waste their creative time in local trains' commuting to work. 'In all, 370 people with their families were moved bag and baggage to Pune,' he said, all now living one to two kilometers from the studio (Vijayalakshmi 2008). Big Animation's focus is on original Indian content, the first example of which is the animated feature film *Hey, Krishna* (2008).

Also in 2007, France's Thomson bought into Paprikaas Animation Studio of Bangalore to bolster its position in the rapidly-growing Indian entertainment industry.

Some of India's studios have become powerful and versatile rather quickly, purchasing parts of U.S. and Singapore houses, moving into 3D and motion capture, and producing full-length animated features. In a very short time, Pentamedia purchased the U.S. film production and distribution company, Improvision, and the Singapore 2D animation house Animasia International.

The rapid development of animation in India has resulted in a number of co-production and partner ventures, such as those of Disney and Yash Raj Films, which plan to produce one animated film yearly; Turner Entertainment and Famous's, Graphiti Multimedia and Miditech; Shemaroo and Sony Pictures Entertainment USA; DQ Entertainment and Universal, Cartoon Network, Nickelodeon, BBC, Italy's RAI, and France's TFI; UTV and Overbrook Entertainment (U.S.), and Toonz and Italian Rainbow Productions. Crest Animation Studios is co-producing three animated films with Lions Gate Entertainment through Crest U.S.'s subsidiary RichCrest Animation. Five companies in London, Los Angeles, and Mumbai worked on *The Golden Compass* and the hit *Ghotothkach – Master of Magic* was a collaboration of India's Shemaroo Entertainment and Sun Animatics, and companies in Canada, England, Philippines, Singapore,

and the U.S. (Allen 2008). The 40-episode series *Freefonix*, which was animated in Trivandrum and included Indian investment, was scripted in Los Angeles and New York, with its voices recorded in Galway, Irish Republic and its animation modeled in Cinnamon Entertainment's studio on the Isle of Man.

One of the main reasons Indian animation firms feel a need to partner is the dearth of skilled talent; in some cases, studios have had to recruit personnel from South Korea and the U.S. to complete productions (Lakshmi 2008: A11). While acknowledging that animation may be joining information technology and biotechnology as important Indian career options, *The Times of India* (May 24, 2008) reported that, 'Rising interest in animation and the huge demand for production have led to shortage of skilled workers and technical infrastructure, pushing up expenses with dependence on imports.' The *Times* claimed that as many as 92 animation films were being made simultaneously in India. Veteran animator Ram Mohan reacted to the nation's large production quota, saying,

> We need a string of good success stories in animation films to make the industry serious. Hanuman has set the ball rolling but now if we don't excel, other films in the pipeline could suffer a setback.
>
> I have more than fifty years' experience developing animation, and I foresee that our industry will have to find an answer to the severe manpower shortage in the genre.
>
> (Joshi 2008)

To handle the manpower issue, some studios have had on-site training programs, such as Pentamedia, RM-USL, and Heart Entertainment; in other instances, individuals have organized training programs. An example of the latter is superstar actor Mohanlal's 'Vismayas Max' studio and academy, designed to teach children hands-on animation in a vacation camp setting. Of course, the National Institute of Design still functions, teaching animation with an emphasis on design. NID has an interesting beginning; it was started after Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru invited the design team of Charles and Ray Eames to India in 1958 to advise him on what he perceived as the deterioration of the quality of things Indian, and how to deal with the advancing forces of Westernization and still benefit from modernization (Deneroff 2003: 131). He also asked the Eames to recommend a program of design to serve small industry. On the basis of the Eames report, the government set up NID in 1961 as an autonomous institute for research, service, and training in industrial design and visual communication. Shortly after, animation was added to the program.

One of the challenges Indian animators have had to face is producing Indian animation content that has global appeal. Some animated feature-length films were aggressively promoted worldwide, such as *Return of Hanuman* and *Ghatothkach – Master of Magic*, but they did not fare well. Many recent animated films are retellings of stories of Hindu gods and goddesses, which, though popular in India, have not yet attracted global audiences. Indian parents like these 'mytho-cartoons' because they introduce ancient tales to a generation that they believe is losing touch with its 5,000-year heritage, and because they supplant what existed before – U.S.

animation and Japanese anime. The first animated Indian mythology show broadcast on television appeared on the Cartoon Network in 2001; called *Padavas*, it was the story from the classical Hindu epic *Mahabharata*, about five princely brothers. Previously, there was the two and a half hour animated feature on the epic, *Ramayana – The Legend of Prince Rama*. Co-produced by Japan's Yugo Sako and Indian animator Ram Mohan, the film was delayed for about a decade because the Indian government refused to allow an animated film based on this religious subject for fear of riots. In 1990, Sako took the project to Japan where it was made, with Mohan providing the visual reference and key drawings. The climate must have changed for in 2007 alone, six full-length animated films dealt with deities – *Hanuman II* (Toonz and Percept) and *Ghatothkach – Master of Magic* (Shemaroo Entertainment), and others on Lord Ganesha (PMI Green Gold Animation), Lord Vishnu (Phebus Creations), and Lord Krishna (two separate films by Color Chips and Ani Rights). In addition, there was *Krishna*, rated the most popular series on any children's television channel in 2007.

Perhaps another indication of societal change is that the mythological stories usually are given modern twists. For example, *Hanuman* was shown watching over New York City, capturing Osama bin Laden, and straightening the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Lakshmi described it as a film:

> to take a revered Hindu story, tweak it, put it in a twenty-first century context and bring the gods down to Earth. It shows the gods talking in colloquial 'Hinglish,' . . . . The deities play the guitar instead of the sitar, use the Internet and dodge bullets as if they were Neo, the hero of the U.S. movie 'The Matrix.'
>
> (Lakshmi 2008: A11)

The box office hit, *My Friend Ganesha*, combining animation and live action, has the elephant-headed god snowboarding and being taught English.

Animated TV series and theater films not based on religion or mythology do exist. In production is a television series of 26 one-half shows featuring Indian tennis star Leander Paes as a miracle man who helps children. Called *The Magic Racquet*, the series is produced by Paes' own company, Leander Sport Pvt. Ltd., in collaboration with Maya Entertainment. An animated feature film in Bengali, *Lal Kalo*/Red Ant, (2008), produced by Elecom Animation Academy of Kolkata and Mumbai's Fiesta Entertainment, is based on a popular novel concerning the love affair between Krishna the black ant and Lohit the red ant, and the turmoil their relationship causes. *Roadside Romeo* (2008) deals with a rich spoiled dog abandoned on Mumbai streets; *Kamlu* (2008) is about a baby camel that gets lost in the desert and finds new friends in the process; *Manikandan*, the first animated feature film in Malayalam, relates the legend of Swami Ayyappa, and the artistic *Manpasand* (2008) tells about a father's journey to find a suitable groom for his daughter. The latter follows the seventeenth century tradition of Northern India, whereby unmarried girls were encouraged to take up Sanjhi paintings, after which they release the paintings free in the river for 'universal blessings.'

As indicated earlier, some television animation takes its stories from popular comic strip characters. As early as 1995, large comics publisher Diamond planned to become involved in animation, as expressed by publisher Maneesh Rai:

> We are speaking to companies about animation too. We are looking for partners; we are speaking to Times group, to ABC (Amitabh Bachan Corporation). We want to come out with *Chacha Chaudhary* as a real brand; we want to market it; we want to merchandise it.
>
> (Rai 1995)

By the late 1990s, Diamond had already started production of a series of *Chacha Chaudhary* animated cartoons (Pran 1998); by 2007, according to the strip's creator, Pran Kumar, over 600 episodes had been aired (Pran 2007).

Rai's sentiment about establishing *Chacha Chaudhary* as a brand has been echoed by animators, who see alternative revenue streams of animation as vital to the industry. Animation head of Adlabs, Siddarth Jain, said studios must establish 'franchiseable' properties, such as spin-off toys, comics, and 'powerful characters who lend themselves to sequels, a slate of films, and then direct to TV and films, licensing, DVD, games' (Iyer and Raghavendra 2007). Some Indian studios have implemented product merchandising, either by creating a cartoon show around an existing product, such as *Gini Aur Jony*, originated from the children's apparel brand name 'Gini and Jony,' or by building a line of products based on animated characters. For example, the success of the feature, *Hanuman*, was fueled by tie-ins with companies such as Pantaloon and Big Bazaar for brand building, Jump Games for mobile gaming, Future Group for toys, D'damas for jewelry, and Junior Diamond for comics.

Among major propellants for the development of animation in a few Asian countries (particularly, China, South Korea, Singapore, and Thailand) have been government leaders, who viewed animation as a cultural product capable of bringing in immense revenues at home and abroad. In India, the government has played a lesser role in animation development, establishing the country's first Special Economic Zone in 2005, solely for animation and computer games, in hopes of bringing in more subcontracts. In 2007, the Indian government trade body, Ficci, proposed a 10 per cent mandatory local animation content quota on TV networks (up to 30 per cent after three years), and sought a 10-year tax holiday for the industry, and the removal of the service tax and the sales tax on animation, gaming, and VFX software.

The Rest of South Asia

Until now, animation production has largely sidestepped Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, despite much interest expressed by comic publishers to move into this area (Harunoor 1993; Pereira 1993).

Nepal appears to be the only other South Asian country to become actively involved in creating animation, much of it as an offshore contractor. One possible reason Nepalese artists ventured into animation relates to the springing up of a number of television stations, including foreign ones

devoted to animation, such as Animax and Cartoon Network. In recent years, Japanese anime has taken Nepal by storm, with popular shows 'Beyblade,' 'Dragonball Z,' 'Voltron,' and 'Transformers.' Other catalysts have been digitalization – the use of computers to generate various animated advertisements and logos for television channels and other businesses – and animation training provided by UNICEF.

UNICEF's interest in animation, purposely for development projects, started in Nepal in the 1980s, when the agency noticed how useful animated films were in transmitting messages on health, and how similar Thangka painting styles and techniques of Nepal were to those of animation. In 1987, UNICEF, in cooperation with the Czechoslovakian National Committee, set up a workshop in Kathmandu to train Nepalese artists in animation. Two Czechoslovakian animators from the Kratky Film Studios supervised the two week training program, from which resulted the country's first animated film, *Shyam*, a short clip about a diarrhea remedy. Two artists from the initial core of workshop participants were sent to Kratky Film Studios in Prague for six months of training. When they returned to Nepal, they established their own studio, which contracts primarily development animation projects (Greene and Reber 1996: 11).

In the late 1980s, two other development animation films were produced – *Rishi Dai and Friends in Clean City*, about solid waste management, and *Development from Below*, on strength in unity, and at fifteen minutes, Nepal's longest work (Fudong 2003:133). Beginning in 1990, Nepal was also part of one of the most successful development animation projects anywhere, the Meena Communication Initiative, which will be discussed later. A non-development animation effort at the beginning of the twenty-first century was *Nunu, the Sleep Fairy*, an animated music video broadcast on television that superimposed animation with live action. It was the work of Nurture Arts Network Initiative, a group of artists, musicians, and film-makers determined to bring 'entertaining educational materials' to children (Fudong 2003: 134).

A Nepali who found success in animation abroad has been stimulating interest in the field during the past couple years. Kiran Joshi began working as a graphics software developer at Disney Studios in the early 1990s, and soon moved into animation as a visual effects supervisor on classics such as *The Lion King*, *Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Atlantis: The Lost Empire*, and others. Recently, he established Pink Slip Productions in the U.S. and its sister studio in Nepal, Incessant Rain. Pink Slip will handle the creative content, while the twenty-member staff of Incessant Rain will do all of the animating (Rana 2007). Joshi sees great potential for animation in Nepal because outfits such as Pentasoft, Transcube, and Maya Academy of Advanced Cinematics have begun teaching animation software, and because 'there is a lot of talent there' (Rana 2007). He bemoans the lack of unity among animators, stating 'most work individually, animating here and there for a few rupees,' but not joining as a team which animation necessitates (Rana 2007).

Other animators, earlier in 2002, saw the animation industry laced with serious problems, including limited opportunities for trained animators, insufficient funds, and a lack of practical experience, technical equipment, appropriate animation studios, and responses from audiences.

Concerning the latter point, animator Raju Babu Shakya said, 'You make a short film, people see it and that's the end. They forget about it' (Shakya 2002). Overall, according to animator Rajendra Rana Magar, to survive as a full-time artist is almost impossible mainly because of the expenses of the required equipment (Magar 2002).

Animation in Sri Lanka has remained stagnant in spite of (and perhaps because of) the twelve television channels devoting prime time to foreign animation. Leading comics publisher Camillus Pereira explained:

> The animation format is not flourishing as a local industry in Sri Lanka at present, as it can, in no way, match the sophistication and technology efficiency of animated products from abroad. But hopefully in near future we also will be able to emerge as a competitor.
>
> (Pereira 2007)

Besides a few education films by the Institute for Television Training, the only known Sri Lankan animation was a short, *Andare*, made by architect Tilak Samarawickrema in 1976. Filmed in Italy in collaboration with European animator Massimino Garnier, *Andare* evolved from a famous Sri Lankan folktale featuring the antics of a popular court jester named Andare. In the animated story, Andare as a child is told by his parents to behave at his sister's wedding. But, in Sri Lanka, the words used can also mean 'behave like a bull,' which Andare does. Communications scholar Sarath Amunugama described the film as depicting a 'world of surrealist landscapes, people and animals' (Amunugama 1977: 10–11).

Except for Sri Lanka, South Asian countries were involved in the Meena Communication Initiative, an animated film campaign to bring awareness of the plight of the region's girl child. Organized by UNICEF, the project started in Bangladesh although it did not draw on the services of that country's animators. The basis for the series grew out of the first Workshop on Animated Film for Development, held in Prague, March 1990; it was the flagship of similar UNICEF projects in South America and Eastern Africa. Through the character of ten-year-old Meena, the film advocated for girls' rights in carefully researched and written stories. In fact, Kenyon (2001: 228) called Meena the largest research project in South Asia; 2,500 people were part of a pretest to determine the appropriate attire, behavior, and characteristics of the character. Eight years in the making, the $6 million 'Meena Communication Initiative' was launched 22 September 1998, in what evolved into thirteen 13-minute films in thirteen Indian and thirty foreign languages. Additionally, to obtain maximum exposure, the initiative published Meena comic books, posters, stickers, etc., broadcast its own radio show, and used mobile film units to take the message to South Asian rural areas.

Conclusion

Animation in South Asia, as divided in this article, consists of the fast developing industry and profession in India, with a plethora of studios producing a large body of commercial work for overseas studios and increasingly for the local market, and the sad state of the field in the rest of the region, still minimally involved in the gestation stages of animation development.

Some of the factors from which India has benefited – inexpensive labor supply attractive to foreign studios, and increased need for animated films with the establishment of many new TV and cable stations that require programming – are also available in Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. However, what is missing in these countries but existing in India is a long animation history, with occasional government support; the professional activities of individuals passionate about animation, such as Gokhale, Weeks, and Mohan; the partnering through subcontracts and co-productions with animation-producing countries; a huge computer industry; and for the time being, a slightly more stable political atmosphere in which to work.

For a region with some cultural similarities, it is strange that more collaboration among animators and would-be animators, similar to that of the Meena Communication Initiative, does not exist, in production or professionalization. Working jointly could be useful to India and to the rest of South Asia.

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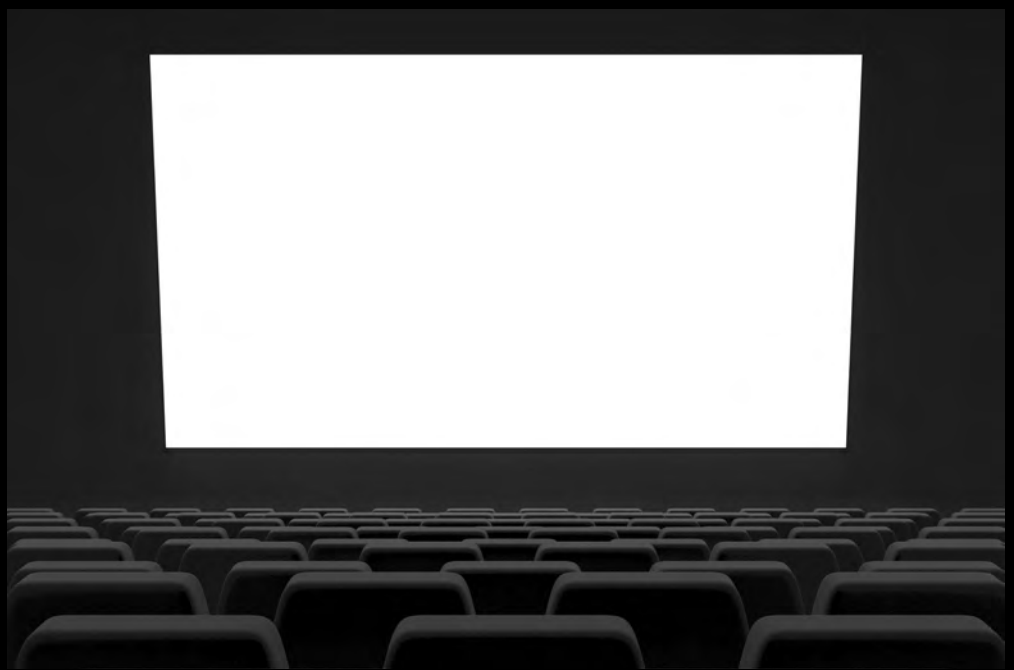

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A Certification Anomaly: The Self-Sacrificial Female Body in Bombay Cinema

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Abstract

Released in 1989 after a long court battle, Pati Parmeshwar/My Husband, My God *is an anomaly in the history of Indian censorship because the debates in which it was enmeshed sought to define what kinds of cinematic representations constituted woman's servility. For decades, committees constituted by the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) had consistently overlooked such representations and focused on censoring sexually explicit images such as close-ups of women's bosoms, thighs and gyrating hips. However, in the case of* Pati Parmeshwar, *the CBFC banned a film which employed a ubiquitous Hindi film trope, namely, the self-sacrificial wife. This article examines this anomalous act and its subsequent consequences, revealing competing visions of the Indian state. These visions underscore that the state is not a monolithic entity.*

Keywords

Film censorship
Hindi cinema
Women
Indian state

A Pedestrian Tale

Released in 1989 after a long court battle, *Pati Parmeshwar/My Husband, My God* is an anomaly in the history of Indian censorship because the debates in which it was enmeshed sought to define what kinds of cinematic representations constituted woman's servility. For decades, committees constituted by the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC)[1] had consistently overlooked such representations and focused on censoring sexually explicit images such as close-ups of women's bosoms, thighs and gyrating hips. However, in the case of *Pati Parmeshwar*, the CBFC banned a film which employed a ubiquitous Hindi film trope, namely, the self-sacrificial wife.

Pati Parmeshwar narrates the story of a con-man, Vijay (Shekhar Suman), who makes money by duping parents of eligible daughters with the promise of marriage – vanishing with the money on the day of the wedding. Following this modus operandi, Vijay seeks to dupe Rekha (Sudha Chandran) and her father (Om Shivipuri); however, upon realizing that her father is very wealthy, Vijay decides to marry her. As soon as Rekha arrives at her in-laws, physical and mental abuse begins. Her mother-in-law and sister in-law humiliate and beat her. Her husband becomes enamored of a courtesan named Tara/Durga (Dimple Kapadia) who is actually one of the many victims of his previous con-jobs – and who seeks him out to take revenge.

1. Within the larger state administration, the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) is a branch of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. The chairperson and the advisory board of the CBFC are appointed by the Central Government. They generally consist of prominent judges, journalists, politicians and members of the film industry. For the most part, they do not participate in the daily work of viewing and certifying films; they are called upon to advice on difficult cases. The

When Rekha discovers her husband's affair with Tara, she is hurt and angry, but eventually decides to save her marriage. Consequently, she endures further humiliations at the hands of her in-laws and husband, all the while praying for her husband's redemption. When Rekha's father attempts to intervene, she sends him back, recalling his advice to her on her wedding day that her *pati* (husband) is her *parmeshwar* (God). During this period, she helps an old man (Alok Nath) who happens to be a victim of her husband's previous con-jobs. The old man is grateful for Rekha's help and urges Vijay not pursue the courtesan. When Vijay demurs, the old man proclaims that God will punish him. The next day, Vijay is paralyzed from the waist down; Rekha cares for him and, for his recovery, undertakes a fast unto death. When Vijay becomes delirious and pines for Tara, Rekha takes him to her place since he is unable to walk there. When Rekha's in-laws discover that Vijay is paralyzed, they decide that both Vijay and Rekha are useless to them and unsuccessfully attempt to kill Rekha by poisoning her. The old man arrives on the scene and threatens to call the police, but Rekha stops him. He then goes to Tara's place to champion Rekha's cause and discovers that Tara is none other than his daughter Durga. He alerts Tara/Durga that the real victim of her vengeance is Rekha which leads her to jilt Vijay. Later, a distraught Vijay is saved from a life-threatening accident by the old man who reveals Tara's true identity, urging him to reform and return to his devoted wife. Vijay arrives at a temple where Rekha is challenging the deity to cure Vijay, failing which she would kill herself. Lightning bolts, seemingly dispatched by the deity, strike Vijay's legs, curing his paralysis. The movie ends with a recovered and reformed Vijay, a reunited couple, in-laws forgiven – a consummately happy family. Instead of the usual 'The End,' the last words emblazoned on the screen are 'Your wife is your destiny.'

Pati Parmeshwar boasted neither a stellar production staff nor cast, besides Dimple Kapadia. It was produced by R.K. Nayyar who began his career as an assistant director for *Boot Polish* (1954) and *Aah* (1953) for Raj Kapoor's RK Films. Shashadhar Mukherjee, a prominent producer, gave him the opportunity to direct his first film, *Love in Simla* (1960), which was a box-office hit and made Sadhana and Joy Mukherjee stars. His directorial efforts in the 1960s, which ranged from successful to moderately successful, followed the dominant formula of the time, combining tourism, romance and action. His next major venture was a thriller entitled *Qatl* (1986), and soon after, wrote and produced, *Pati Parmeshwar.* Nayyar hired Madan Joshi, who had worked under him when he made *Intequam* (1969), to direct *Pati Parmeshwar*. Joshi had primarily worked as a dialogue writer and had also appeared on the 'big' screen in bit roles. The film's heroine was Sudha Chandran who played the role of the self-sacrificial wife. Chandran, a former classical dancer, turned to acting following the loss of a leg in an accident in 1982. Before beginning *Pati Parmeshwar,* she had only starred in a Telugu film *Mayuri* (1984) and its Hindi remake, *Nacche Mayuri* (1986), which were inspired by her life story. While Chandran was relatively unknown in the Hindi film industry, its 'other woman', Dimple Kapadia, had made a famed debut in Raj Kapoor's blockbuster *Bobby* (1973) and exited the film industry after marrying superstar Rajesh Khanna. In 1984, Kapadia divorced Khanna

chairperson generally serves as CBFC's spokesperson, addressing queries and concerns about censorship from the public, journalists and members of the industry. The work of viewing and certifying films is carried out by advisory panels located at the regional centers. The center in Bombay, where I observed examining committees at work, is the most recognized one. Others centers are located in Bangalore, Calcutta, Cuttack, Delhi, Hyderabad, Madras and Thiruvananthapuram. The center in Bombay has about 100 members drawn from the public, including members of the film industry, journalists, teachers and housewives.

and returned to acting. Alok Nath, who plays Dimple Kapadia's downtrodden father in the film (a role he would continue to play in subsequent films), had acted in a few films but earned success in the television serial *Buniyaad* (1987). Shekhar Suman essayed the role of the con-man/husband. He had begun his career as television actor in the serial *Wah Janab* (1984). Prior to *Pati Parmeshwar*, he had worked in a few films, including *Naache Mayuri* (1986) with Sudha Chandran.[2]

In an era dominated by action films including the Avenging Woman genre,[3] Nayyar chose to put his money in a different kind of film, namely, the family melodrama. The inspiration for *Pati Parmeshwar* appears to have come from Telugu director T. Rama Rao who enjoyed a virtually uninterrupted run of successes by introducing the 'Madras movie' into Hindi. Rao first tasted success in Telugu cinema with 'his crude variations upon L.V. Prasad-Pratyagatma's family drama theme, relying on dialogue, rapid cutting and spectacle.' (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen 1995: 176)[4] He went on to replicate successful family melodramas and cheaper shooting styles from Telugu films into Hindi. His Hindi oeuvre included *Maang Bharo Sajana* (1980), *Judaai* (1980), *Ek Hi Bhool* (1981), *Jeevan Dhara* (1982), *Mujhe Insaaf Chahiye* (1983), *Sadaa-Suhagan* (1986), and *Naseeb Apna Apna* (1986) which would become a benchmark for Nayyar as discussed later.[5]

Like *Naseeb Apna Apna/Each Person Has His/Her Own Fate*, *Pati Parmeshwar* dealt with the problem of a wayward husband, a familiar theme in Hindi cinema.[6] Nayyar's heroine, Rekha, followed the course of devotion, love and prayer in order to reform both her husband and in-laws. Considering that narratives in which women resolve family disputes via self-sacrifice are pervasive in Hindi cinema, the CBFC's decision to ban this film appears to be unusual. Certainly, Nayyar did not think he had produced an atypical film; he was simply following a tried and tested Hindi film formula. To understand the CBFC's decision, we need to consider the context of the film's reception. The film was examined by the CBFC at a time when Indian feminist activists were vociferously campaigning against dowry, violence against women and demeaning portrayals of women in the media. During this period, the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986, which barred images that depicted women as sexual objects, was passed by the Indian parliament.[7] (Gangoli 2007: 70) In addition, Doordarshan, the state-sponsored television channel, introduced a new guideline for advertisers in 1987, requiring that 'women not be portrayed in a manner that emphasizes passive, submissive qualities and encourages them to play a subordinate, secondary role in the family and society' (Gangoli 2007: 70–71).

Two defining events of the 1980s were the volatile controversies surrounding the Shah Bano and Roop Kanwar cases. The *Pati Parmeshwar* case harnesses the concerns raised in debates on Shah Bano and Roop Kanwar about women's agency, rights and relationship to tradition, as well as the role of the state *vis-à-vis* women, religious community and family – and *re-presents* them. Consequently, I would like to provide a more detailed account of these cases. The Shah Bano case, brought before the Supreme Court in 1985, foregrounded the state's relationship to Muslim personal law. In 1978, Shah Bano filed a petition in the Indore Magistrate's Court, 'asking her husband be ordered to pay her maintenance'(Kumar 1993: 161).

2. During the making of *Love in Simla*, Nayyar and Sadhana fell in love; despite her mother's objections, they tied the knot six years after the film's release. 'Entry on R.K. Nayyar,' available at: http://indianfilmtrade.com/services/filmdatabase/actor_details.php?actor_id=22615. Accessed June 12, 2008. Dinesh Raheja, 'Sadhana's Song,' available at: http://www.rediff.com/entertai/2002/feb/11dinesh.htmp.176. Accessed June 12, 1988. 'Entry on Sadhana Shivdasani,' available at: http://www. imdb.com/name/nm0623321/bio. Accessed on June 12, 2008. 'Entry on R.K. Nayyar,' available at: http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0623321/bio. Accessed on June 12, 2008. 'Entry on Madan Joshi,' available at: http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0430799/. Accessed on June 12, 2008. 'Entry on Sudha Chandran,' available at: http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0151534/. Accessed on June 12, 2008. 'Entry on Dimple Kapadia,' available at: http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0438092/. Accessed on June 12, 2008. 'Entry on Alok Nath,' available at: http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0622186/. Accessed on June 12, 2008. 'Entry on Shekhar Suman,' available at: http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0838522/.

Accessed on June 12, 2008.

3. For more detailed examination of the Avenging Woman Genre and the action genres, see the works cited section at the end of this article.

4. I am grateful that reviewer for this article brought to my attention that 'from the 1970s there had been a strong intervention from the south through producers like B. Nagi Reddy and Dasari Narayana Rao which exalted the devoted wife and domestic values.'

5. I will further examine *Naseeb apna apna* later in the article.

6. Some other films of note that have a reform/self-sacrifice theme include *Gunsundari* (1927; 1934), *Dulhan Wahi Jo Piya Man Bhaye* (1977), and *Main Tulsi Tere Angan Ki* (1978).

7. Feminists argue that this act did not address the concerns and aspirations of women's campaigns. Rather, it bolstered state authority and it enabled the state to further regulate citizens' lives.

8. For further discussion on the Shah Bano and Roop Kanwar cases, see Kumar (1993: 160–181). For a more detailed examination of the historical conjuncture of feminism, Hindu nationalism and the initial questioning of the Nehruvian paradigm, see the following select references: Bacchetta (2004); John (2004:

While the court did rule in her favor, it only provided a meager sum. Shah Bano 'went on to appeal to the Madhya Pradesh High Court which raised the amount. . . .' (Kumar 1993: 161). At this point, her former husband went to the Supreme Court arguing that the judgment 'exceeded [the High court's] jurisdiction and violated Muslim personal law as stated by the *Shariat*' (Kumar 1993: 161). The Supreme Court eventually ruled in favor of Shah Bano, stating that she was entitled to maintenance by her husband. The judgment became controversial because it suggested that 'Muslim Personal Law was bad and the "Muslim community" preferred unjust laws so somebody (in this case the State) would have to impose "justness" on them' (Kumar 1993: 163). In the end, there was so much pressure brought to bear on Shah Bano by sections of the Muslim community and her family that she asked the Supreme Court to record that she stood against the petition they had upheld and refused to accept the maintenance that the court had accorded her.

In September 1987, Roop Kanwar's death incited a furious debate on *sati* (widow immolation). Kanwar's husband died soon after their marriage. After his death, his family decided that she would 'become' a sati:

> (T)he impending event was announced in advance, because *sati* is always a public spectacle. Yet, her family was not informed about this event. Evidence which trickled out pointed to murder: some of her neighbors said that Roop Kanwar had tried to run away and to hide in a barn before the ceremony, but was dragged out, pumped full of drugs, dressed in her bridal finery and put on the pyre. . . . The pyre itself was lit by her brother-in-law, a minor.
>
> (Kumar 1993: 174–175)

Soon after, this immolation site became a popular pilgrimage site and mementos showing Roop Kanwar smiling blissfully on the pyre, as well as devotional songs, began to be sold. Her father in-law formed an organization 'to run the site and collect donations' (Kumar 1993: 175). There were demonstrations both against and for the immolation. Neither the local, state, or central government intervened to punish Roop Kanwar's in-laws, the doctor who had drugged her, or the persons who had profited from her death.[8]

Unusual Decisions

Pati Parmeshwar came up for certification in the same month as the debate on Roop Kanwar erupted in the media. Nayyar first applied to CBFC for certification on September 30, 1987. After viewing *Pati Parmeshwar*, the Examining Committee unanimously concluded that it could not issue a certificate for its exhibition. In an official letter to Nayyar, Anna Dani, the Regional Officer at the CBFC, gave the following reasons for refusing to certify the film:

> The film upholds traditional subjugation of women as a positively desirable moral asset. In the process, woman has been shown as totally servile and this servility has been glorified both in dialogues, visuals and recurring refrains of songs, highlighting this characteristic as a positive aspect of

Indian culture. By such portrayal the film trivializes the genuine serious and tragic consequences of socio-economic crimes against women. Despite official pronouncements about the undesirability of dowry, maltreatment of wives and sati, the film presents a retrograde view on this issue. While bride burning and deaths of wives at the hands of their in-laws in current-day Indian society has been condemned by progressive sections of the society, the film shows in an episode that Rekha barely escapes death by poisoning at her in-laws' hands. However Rekha states that they have done no wrong and that the police should not be called. There are several other objectionable dialogues and visuals promoting this servility. But the most reprehensible was the sequence where Rekha takes her husband to a prostitute since he is unable to walk himself. The film becomes all the more objectionable when this servility is contrasted against the character of the husband. This makes Rekha's attitude all the more insulting and demeaning to all women. Hence it has been refused a certificate under guidelines 2 (iv) (a), keeping in mind that the medium of film should be responsive to the values and standards of society.

(CBFC, Examining Committee Report on *Pati Parmeshwar* 1987)

246–258); Mazumdar (1994: 243–273) (1995: 1–28); Sarkar (2001); Sundar Rajan (1993); Tharu and Niranjana (1996: 232–260).

Dani invoked guideline 2 (iva), which was introduced in May 1983, to deny certification. The guideline asks committees' to ensure that 'visuals or words depicting women in ignoble servility to man and glorifying such servility as a praiseworthy quality in women are not presented' (Censorship Guidelines 1983). Her later comments, cited below, in a writ petition suggest that this guideline was, in some measure, a result of pressure placed on CBFC by women's organizations:

From time to time the Board has received complaints from the public and Women's Organizations and also questions were raised in Parliament regarding the portrayal of women in films especially depicting women in servility to men or glorifying such servility as a praiseworthy quality in women. In the Constitution it is stressed that equality of status should be given to women and portrayal of women in films in ignoble servility to men does not fulfill the objective mentioned in the Constitution and such portrayal gives a wrong impression to the viewers in a progressive society and such portrayals do not show a desirable social change in values. As early as 1981, the recognized association of film producers and other film bodies were informed that the Board will not pass films which show woman as servile to man and portrayal of women in any denigrating manner will not be certified after the present guideline 2 (iva) was introduced in May 1983. With this background, the film 'Pati Parmeshwar' was examined and a certificate was refused.

(The High Court of Judicature at Bombay, Writ Petition No. 38 of 1988, 17 February)

Considering her letter as well as comments in the writ petition, one could argue that the Roop Kanwar case and ongoing agitations by women's groups put pressure on the CBFC to take a stance on women's representation. In articulating this stance, Dani invoked the tenets of the modern Nehruvian state which viewed socio-economic crimes against women as an impediment to establishing a modern India.

Appeal to the Revising Committee

Upon receiving Dani's letter refusing certification, Nayyar took his film to the next level of bureaucracy in the CBFC, namely, the Revising Committee. In his appeal to the Revising Committee, Nayyar systematically countered the Examining Committee's objections, asserting that they had misread the film. The concept of tradition played a central role in Nayyar's argument. According him, the film commended Indian women for upholding the 'glorious' Indian tradition:

> Among the very first reasons given by you is that the film 'upholds traditional subjugation of women as a positively desirable moral asset.' The emphasis is on the word **TRADITIONAL**[9]. … This one word is the solitary sentinel safeguarding our cultural heritage. … **TRADITION** alone has enabled us to bear the thunderbolts of history stoically and with equanimity and still hold our heads high in the Community of Nations. … **Pati Parmeshwar** believes in **TRADITION**, particularly the tradition of Indian housewife's valiant efforts through the centuries to preserve and protect the sanctity and unity of her home.
>
> (Nayyar 1987)

Nayyar puts forward 'tradition' as that which forms India's unique cultural identity and power – and equates it with the preservation of 'home,' i.e. kinship relations, family and marriage. Indian women are cast as the guardians and protectors of this 'tradition.' Rekha, Nayyar explained, was simply following in the footsteps of revered women in Hindu tradition such as 'Savitri, Anusya, Gandhari of *Mahabharatha*, and Sita of *Ramayana*' (Nayyar 1987). Any condemnation of such tradition, he claimed, was tantamount to 'sacrilege' (Nayyar 1987). Nayyar's invocation of these virtuous figures as empowering examples of Indian womanhood was not new. Since the end of the nineteenth century, Rochana Majumdar writes, '[t]hese mythical names became iconic and routine in what was written about women's emancipation' (Majumdar 2002: 20). For those like Nayyar, they recalled 'a history of women's agency and respect in Indian society'; for others, they were 'totems of patriarchal oppression and deprivation' (Majumdar 2002: 20) which needed to be overcome.

Combining moral and constitutional challenges, Nayyar did not only charge the Examining Committee with 'sacrilege,' but also accused the members of religious discrimination. Alluding to the extant discussions on personal law and civil code (which included the Shah Bano case), Nayyar asserted that as a 'Hindu film producer,' he should be allowed to represent Hindu traditions:

> India is one country and no two different religions are to be meted out different treatments. If the highest office of this country can be forced by Muslims to have a separate law for themselves based on their scriptures written a thousand years back, surely, the Censor Board should have no objection if a Hindu film producer merely extols the virtue of a woman who lives up to her religious traditions especially when her deep religious attitude benefits everybody and hurts none.
>
> (Nayyar 1987)

9. The bold face-type is in R.K. Nayyar's letters.

Thus, as a citizen, he demanded the Indian state live up to its secular promise and treat all religions equally. In constructing this statement, he drew upon an argument common to Hindu nationalist discourse, namely that the Muslim minority in India had been given privileges denied to the Hindu majority; this imbalance between the two was unjust and needed to be rectified. An effect of a debate ostensibly on censorship was the (re)production of communal discourse,[10] as women's conduct and tradition were combined to construct separate and unified Hindu and Muslim communities.

Nayyar claimed that in producing *Pati Parmeshwar*, he had followed in the footsteps of other great films which had represented Hindu tradition. He asserted that his 'valiant' efforts at upholding India's cinematic tradition were analogous to the 'noble' efforts of Rekha in maintaining the 'tradition of the Indian housewife'. Only a 'perverse logic,' Nayyar contended, could interpret this 'noble' film as one which degraded women. If the committee wished to ban ignoble representations of women, Nayyar indignantly noted, then they should have prohibited films like *Naseeb Apna Apna* (1986) in which:

> the heroine [Radhika], married to Rishi Kapoor, actually begs him to let her stay in his house as a maid-servant and serve him and his mistress Farha. . . . That was **SERVILITY**.
>
> (Nayyar 1987)

Contrasting such servile conduct with the actions of *Pati Parmeshwar*'s heroine, Nayyar stated that Rekha had chosen:

> voluntarily to follow the traditional Indian Woman's role and make a sincere effort to make her marriage work and win back her husband. It is an uphill task and she puts up a valiant fight and finally succeeds. Would anyone call it servility?
>
> (Nayyar 1987)

Nayyar was not wrong in questioning the Board's decision as to why they chose to ban his film while giving a 'U' certificate to *Naseeb Apna Apna*. *Pati Parmeshwar* is similar to *Naseeb Apna Apna* in the tactics employed by the heroines. In both films, the heroines seek to reform their wayward husbands through prayer and devotion. In *Naseeb Apna Apna*, Kishan (Rishi Kapoor), a record company executive, is forced into an arranged marriage with a homely village girl Chando (Radhika) by his father. He abandons his wife soon after and marries an attractive, urbane colleague, Radha (Farah Khan). His first wife arrives at his new home and discovers that he is married to another woman; Chando decides to stay in their house as a 'servant.' When Chando's father-in-law discovers her servile status, he seethes with anger, promising to straighten out his son. Chando begs him to leave and let her handle the situation. While in the house, Chando cooks and cleans for the couple and teaches Radha marital traditions such as *karva chauth* (a fast that married women in North India generally observe for the well-being of their husbands). Eventually, with Radha's help, Chando transforms into a well-groomed woman, a suitable wife for an executive. Chando's transformation is noticed by Radha's brother who

10. Communalism, Pandey writes, is 'a product of colonial knowledge.' This product, Bipin Chandra reminds us, presumes that a person's religious identity determines his or her social, political and economic interests. By privileging religious identity, this concept reduces the complex formation of a person's identity into a palatable category. This form of categorization in the case of India has had significant political and social consequences, i.e., the destruction of the Babri Masjid in 1992. Therefore, I think it is important to trace the construction of this concept and to situate it within a wide field. As Pandey explains, communalism 'stands for the puerile and the primitive – all that colonialism in its own reckoning was not. The paradox is that the nationalists have zealously worked to corroborate this conception.' Pandey indicates that the formation of communalism cannot simply be attributed to the colonizers, but it must be situated within a wider field if we are to contend with the rise of Hindu nationalism in India today. Pandey 1990; Chandra 1984.

expresses a romantic interest in her. This interest arouses Kishen's jealousy. He realizes his mistake and returns to his first wife. In the end, Radha kills herself to make way for the 'real' married couple.

Applying the CBFC's interpretation of the guidelines, one could argue that *Naseeb Apna Apna* also glorified women's servility. *Naseeb Apna Apna*'s director, T. Rama Rao, had a greater stature than Nayyar, and Rishi Kapoor and Farah Khan were established stars. Considering this, one could concur with Nayyar's later arguments to the Bombay High Court that the CBFC's decisions were dependent upon 'who the hero is and/or who the producer is and/or at times even who the story writer is … who at the time are the panel members and who at his sweet will and pleasure, wields the censor's scissors' (The High Court of Judicature at Bombay, Writ Petition No. 38 of 1988, 22 June). Nayyar's frustration with the CBFC's arbitrariness is pervasive in his many petitions. I would suggest that instead of seeing this arbitrariness as a flaw, we view it as constitutive of the state's operations. After all, it is this very arbitrariness in the state's decision-making process which enables Nayyar's film to be certified in the end.

In addition to exposing the CBFC's capricious nature, Nayyar wishes to use *Naseeb Apna Apna* as a foil to demonstrate that Rekha is an active agent rather than a subjugated woman. In this instance as well as in later appeals, Nayyar draws upon a liberal democratic discourse, underscoring Rekha's will, choice, and volition:

> She has choices; options … She voluntarily and willingly undertakes the journey … All her actions in the film are voluntary and of free will and choice … Despite various options before her she voluntarily chooses on her own to stand firm on her marriage vows … She is not shown doing any act, I repeat once again, against free will … the entire theme of the said film is one which depicts the wife Rekha undertaking all her actions totally voluntarily and without coercion, whatsoever … She is affluent and educated, a woman of the world, who elects to adopt the role of the traditional wife … she elects, once again, to devote herself to placing her misguided husband on the correct path.
>
> (Nayyar 1987)

By mobilizing this discourse, Nayyar seeks to depict Rekha as an ethical, liberal subject as opposed to a subjugated woman who needed to be rescued by liberal democracy. However, he failed to convince Revising committee, a majority of its members' viewing Rekha's behavior as servile. In the initial discussion which followed the screening, the Revising Committee refused to certify the film, by a majority of four to three:

> Four members (Prof. Vanamali, Ms. Gandhi, Smt. [Mrs.] Phatak and Smt. Ganjawalla) felt that the film clearly, completely and overtly violated guidelines 2(iva) read with 1(c) and 3(ii).[11] The woman is shown in totally 'conditioned' and servile attitude and the servility practised by the heroine is glorified from the beginning to the end which promotes totally negative, undesirable and out-dated values. The film tries to say that an Indian wife has no status or identity without her husband who at all times is her God. These four members, therefore, felt that the film should be refused a

11. Bombay, CBFC, Revising Committee Report on *Pati Parmeshwar*, 20 October 1987. See Film Censorship Guidelines, 1984. Rule 2(iva) states 'visuals or words depicting women in ignoble servility to man or glorifying such servility as a praiseworthy quality in women are not presented'; rule 1(c) states 'censorship is responsive to social change'; and rule 3 (ii) states a film is 'examined in the light of contemporary standards of the country and the people to which the film related.'

> certificate. The remaining three members (Shri [Mr.] Sippy, Smt. Sinha and Shri Sharma) did not subscribe to these views. They felt that the heroine, who is brought up in a traditional family background, is shown trying to bring her husband to the right path with love, devotion and constant prayers. Ultimately her efforts are fruitful. These three members, therefore, did not consider the role of the heroine to be servile. They felt that the film could be granted a 'U' certificate with some cuts.[12]

The discussion split almost evenly for and against Nayyar's arguments, demonstrating the fissures in state practices; this division focused on what constituted women's servility. 'Self-interest' and 'self-sacrifice', Rochana Majumdar argues, define the historiography of women's rights in India:

> 'Women came to be depicted either as capable of sacrificing their interests and therefore, being virtuous, or as interest bearing subjects who were disadvantaged precisely through talk of self-sacrifice'.
>
> (Majumdar 2002: 21)

The arguments of the majority and the minority on the committee, who largely concur with Nayyar, coalesce around these two nodal points.

As a routine practice, the official letter sent to Nayyar focused on the Revising Committee's decision and did not provide Nayyar with the deliberations of the committee. By screening its operations and not disclosing the dissenting voices, the letter effectively presents the committee, and by extension the state, as a unified entity. The majority, who concurred with the Examining Committee's decision, claimed that Nayyar's appeal did not address the:

> thrust of the objections raised by the Examining Committee by merely stating that India's 'tradition' is glorious and distorting the meaning of 'tradition'. The film is not responsive to the social change in our country and shows woman in total servility.
>
> (Bombay, CBFC, Revising Committee Report on *Pati Parmeshwar* 1987)[13]

According to these members, it was Nayyar's logic which was 'perverse' as he had simply twisted 'India's tradition' to suit his purposes. Interestingly, there were also differences amongst the three dissenting members with regard to the six cuts they proposed.[14] A cut recommended by Mr. Sippy and Mr. Sharma is noteworthy because it required Nayyar to '[d]elete the visual of "Sati" in the painting'. Nayyar countered the subject of *sati* was 'not even remotely connected with any scene, song, dialogues or visuals of my film. The Board might have misunderstood the still-visual of Sita's Agni Pariksha as Sati …'(Nayyar 1987). Mr. Sippy and Mr. Sharma's (mis) reading of the still indicated a preoccupation with widow burning. This preoccupation demonstrates the effect of the political context, in this instance the Roop Kanwar case, on the committee's decision.

Appeal to the Film Certification Appellate Tribunal

Undaunted by the Revising Committee's refusal to certify his film, Nayyar appealed to the next level of bureaucracy, namely, the Film Certification

12. The Film Certification Appellate Tribunal was set up in 1981 to hear appeals against the decisions of the CBFC. It is located in New Delhi, India.
13. These dissenting voices do not appear in the letter sent to R.K. Nayyar on October 29, 1987 informing him of the majority decision.
14. The cuts focused evenly on removing 'vulgar' and 'servile' images and dialogues from the film.

Appellate Tribunal. At the outset, he submitted that the guidelines under which *Pati Parmeshwar* had been refused certification were unconstitutional, going 'beyond the scope of the Section 5, sub-sections 5-B (1) and 5-B (2).'[15] Furthermore, he argued that the decisions of the Examining and Revising Committees had been 'incorrect on the following grounds':

> My film, as I understand it, is being refused a certificate, not on the grounds of any gruesome violence, or scene of obscene sex, but because it presents a point of view about a woman's role, and the way in which a marriage should be saved, which happens to be at variance with that of the members of the Examining Committee and the Revising Committee. This, I submit, is being unfair to me.
>
> (Nayyar 1987)

In refusing to certify a film which did not transgress the limits of violence, 'decency' and 'morality', Nayyar contended that the committees had been unjust and had violated his constitutional right to freedom of expression. Nayyar equated 'morality' and 'decency' with the prohibition of sexually explicit representations. When he fails to convince the Revising committee, Nayyar's argument shifts from 'tradition' to 'freedom of expression.' Invoking the discourse of liberal democracy, he appeals to the state as a citizen, demanding his rights.

Nayyar felt that as an 'Indian and as a film-maker' he had the right to 'express a point of view, an attitude, which is at variance and does not concur with the official point of view' (Nayyar 1987). Explaining his viewpoint, Nayyar noted:

> Today, I can say the world is divided into two kinds of societies, broadly speaking, on the issue of how to deal with a situation where a woman happens to be married to an undesirable character as shown in my film. The so-called modern or Western society would perhaps instantly advise divorce proceedings and a chance for the woman to start life again. A traditional society would recommend or appreciate a woman who through her love, devotion, and loyalty, patiently tries to reform the husband, open his eyes and return him to a path of goodness. . . . The point of view on which *Pati Parmeshwar* is based is only taken from the scriptures and hallowed by tradition. It is a point of view which psychiatrists, psychologists, educationists, moral and religious leaders, are re-examining in the light of today's tension-filled times and millions of broken homes scarring the face of a permissive society. It is a **POINT OF VIEW** that is valid today and is needed to be emphatically restated in today's times (1987).

Deploying oft-heard arguments, Nayyar accused the 'modern/Western' society and the 'women's lib' movement of contributing to the dissolution of marriage and family life. In contrast, the traditional values presented in *Pati Parmeshwar* sustained both marriage and family life. According to Nayyar, the 'West' (marked as 'modern') was morally bankrupt and required the assistance of tradition to stop its decay. An example of such

15. *The Cinematograph Act*, 1952. Section 5-B (1) states, 'A film shall not be certified for public exhibition if, in the opinion of the authority competent to grant the certificate, the film or any part of it is against the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality, or involves defamation or contempt of court or is likely to incite the commission of any offence.' Section 5-B (2) states, 'Subject to the provisions in sub-section (1), the Central Government may issue such directions as it may think fit setting out the principles which shall guide the authority competent to grant certificates under this Act in sanctioning films for exhibition.' Nayyar 1987.

decay was the 'women's lib' movement whose effect had been broken homes and families. Nayyar argued:

> The Board has described the voluntary devotion, love, sacrifice, forgiveness and loyalty of a wife to her husband as a symbol of woman's servility to man. In the same way, I too can be justified by describing their upholding of modern and so-called progressive values as exemplified in smooth granting of a certificate to films like KAASH showing a wife walking out on her husband at the first provocation as making a direct contribution to breaking up of homes. … At a time when films advocating violence, vendetta, vengeance, viciousness and salisciousness, unrestricted and abound sex are freely being shown, I feel that a film like 'Pati Parmeshwar' has all the more reasons to be encouraged to fight the wrong values above-mentioned, and to restore a sense of appreciation, of basic nobility, goodness and forgiveness which alone can fight the disturbing social trends of today (1987).

Nayyar counters the CBFC's interpretation that *Pati Parmeshwar* depicts women's servility by contrasting it with the films that the CBFC had certified. Later, in a writ petition to the Bombay High Court, he explicitly states that the CBFC is in effect advocating divorce and violence, which are destructive to the social fabric (The High Court of Judicature at Bombay, Writ Petition No. 38 of 1988, 6 January). Nayyar asserted, on the other hand, that his film taught values that preserved marriage and family life and consequently, was relevant to contemporary society.

Nayyar proceeded to narrate the story of this 'noble' film and to provide an interpretation which highlighted its 'valuable' lessons. In his continuing effort to challenge the view that the film glorified women's subjugation, Nayyar cast Rekha as a Gandhian 'passive' resistor, thereby, consolidating her role as an ethical subject:

> Rekha finds herself tricked into marriage with a cheat who is deeply enamoured of other women. Her choice is to make good of her marriage … It is an uphill task and she puts up a valiant fight with the weapon of passive resistance and succeeds … Rekha aims at total and complete transformation of her husband. The concept of her Gandhian Philosophy is the remission of his sins through her forbearing. If forbearance is crime or ignoble, Jesus Christ and Mahatma Gandhi died in vain and what Gautama preached was wrong. Rekha does suffer in the process. But to a Hindu, Rekha suffering is the best form of prayer. Her upbringing has taught her that to suffer is to pray and to pray is to suffer … [India's] traditions like self-abnegation, self-sacrifice and non-violence are considered its prime virtue. Sehan Shakti is not a weakness. It is unequalled power SHAKTI means power.
>
> (Nayyar 1987)

Combining ethics and politics, Gandhi had forged a new form of resistance against British colonialism. In doing so, he drew upon the trope of attaining what one seeks through self-abnegation (fasting, prayer, pilgrimage, and non-violent persuasion through stellar behavior) which has been pervasive in India. In fact, he often reiterated that he had learned 'passive resistance'

from observing Indian women. As Nayyar equates Rekha's domestic struggle with Gandhi's anti-colonial resistance, the domestic space transforms into a political terrain – and Rekha becomes a politico-ethical subject who employs tactics like self-sacrifice, devotion, and prayer to successfully reform her husband. It is by casting Rekha as a politico-ethical subject that Nayyar is able to say that '*the film is, in fact a feminist film*, underlining the importance of marriage and the bliss in its permanence, one that should be viewed particularly by men, to caution themselves against the consequence of unreasonable dominance and lack of compassion. …'(my emphasis) (The Film Certification Appellate Tribunal Order 1987).

Genre, the State and the 'Divine'

The Tribunal, however, was not receptive to Nayyar's arguments. Cementing the views of the Examining Committee and the majority on the Revising Committee, members of the Tribunal stated:

> the film is full of scenes showing a servile role for women and glorifying such a role in a male dominated society … The message given to women is that they should meekly submit to humiliations, cruelties and sufferings inflicted by wicked husbands and their family.
>
> (The Film Certification Appellate Tribunal Order 1987)

In the Tribunal's view, the film sought to 'resurrect' and promote 'anachronistic customs' which hindered women's progress. As an example, they cited the film's conclusion: the divine miracle curing the husband's paralyzed legs which fuels superstitious beliefs. There is a real danger that credulous women seeing the film might begin to believe that going on a fast and praying devoutly could affect miraculous cures when all systems of medicine prove ineffective – as shown in the film. Since this film is a 'social' and not a 'mythological', such statements go against the very grain of a scientific, rational approach we are asked to uphold (The Film Certification Appellate Tribunal Order 1987).

The Tribunal's decision (The Film Certification Appellate Tribunal Order 1987)[16] suggested that 'superstitious beliefs', 'miraculous cures' and 'derogatory representations of women' needed to be prohibited because they hindered the formation of a modern India. While the Tribunal argues that it must uphold 'a scientific and rational approach,' this criterion is not listed in the censorship guidelines. Moreover, it implies that a social should adopt this approach; in the process, it attempts to reproduce, in generic form, the vision of a Nehruvian state. However, the social which emerged in the 1950s was not committed to a 'scientific' and 'rational' approach; it drew upon various genres in constructing its narratives. It eluded a strict definition beyond the fact that it was 'set in contemporary times and generated societal images' (Prasad 1998, Vasudevan 1989: 30; Thomas 1987: 304). Most Hindi films, including socials, contained 'divine' elements, as Nayyar notes in his appeal to the Bombay High Court:

> the impugned order in holding that the said film values superstitious beliefs and will be a danger to credulous women, is clearly discriminatory since

16. The Tribunal bolstered the previous guidelines with an additional rule 1(a) stating 'The medium of film remains responsible and sensitive to the values and standards of society.'

almost every Hindi movie portrays an entreaty made to divine power to which there is positive response.

(The High Court of Judicature at Bombay, Writ Petition No. 38 of 1988, February 23)

Owing to promiscuous filing practices, the *Pati Parmeshwar* case file at the CBFC contained materials from another film, *The Bed Room Story* (1988), in which another Tribunal expressed similar anxieties about supernatural elements:

Certifying a film having some elements of superstitions and supernatural would not justify certifying films which have excess of these. A line is necessarily to be drawn beyond which these phenomena will contravene the guidelines. Again, no hard and fast rule can possibly be laid down and it is left to the intelligence of the members of the Board and its advisory panels and the Tribunal to decide the same, keeping in view the overall impact a film is likely to have over the prevailing standards and the sensitivities of the society with a view to make the society move forward and prevent it from sliding into the old backwardness.

(The High Court of Judicature at Bombay,
Writ Petition No. 1904 of 1986. 20 January 1988)

These anxieties echo concerns raised in the CBFC's deliberations during the early 1980s. In her writ petition to the Bombay High Court, Dani points out that the CBFC in 1981 had decided to generate new rules governing the censorship of anti-scientific and anti-rational representations in addition to the portrayal of women as servile:

The Board felt that films whose total impact on the audience was clearly negative in so far as progressive social change was concerned, should be discouraged and that the Board should keep in mind the constitutional obligation enjoined on all citizens to develop a scientific temper. Accordingly the Board resolved that careful attention should be given to the following points while censoring films: (i) Does the film induce or strengthen irrational and superstitious beliefs and have the effect of promoting cults and customs that invoke supernatural agencies that are claimed to reward believers and harm non-believers?

(Ministry of Information and Broadcasting F (C) 1982. File No. 805/2/82-F(C))

While a directive prohibiting 'anti-scientific' visuals or words does not appear in the guidelines until 1991, it seems to have influenced the decision-making process well before that as demonstrated in the cases of *Pati Parmeshwar* and *The Bed Room Story.*

The CBFC's apprehensions compel us to consider the role of miracles and the 'divine' in *Pati Parmeshwar*. In undertaking this query, I would like to draw upon Philip Lutgendorf's insights in his analysis of the superhit mythological, *Jai Santoshi Maa/Hail Goddess Santoshi*. Lutgendorf offers an alternative construction of women's agency by demonstrating how the divine empowers and enables the heroine, Satyavati, to negotiate and resolve problems associated with entry into a new household such as mistreatment by in-laws and burdens of housework (Lutgendorf 2003: 19–42). Unlike the 1970s' 'Angry Young Man,' Satyavati employs prayer

rather than violence to achieve her goals. Furthermore, she is not a transgressive figure but a:

> humble, submissive woman who overtly asks little for herself. While appearing to adhere to the code of a conservative extended family (the systemic abuses of which are dramatically highlighted), Satyavati nevertheless quietly achieves goals, shared by many women that subvert this code.
>
> (Lutgendorf 2003: 27)

Like *Jai Santoshi Maa*, *Pati Parmeshwar* poses a set of contemporary concerns for women: arranged marriage, marital infidelity, and the difficulties of moving to a new household (which might include demands for money, pressures to do housework, mental as well as physical abuse by in-laws). It posits and then discards assistance from Rekha's father as well as allopathic and traditional medicine as potential 'cures' for the problems of marital dispute and paralysis, respectively. More importantly, the state plays no role at all in *Pati Parmeshwar*, despite the film dealing with concerns such as gender inequality and violence against women that were central to the Nehruvian state. In fact, in the single instance in the film when a character, Tara/Durga's father, threatens to call the police, Rekha urges him not to do so. It is the 'divine' that propels the narrative and resolves problems (e.g. Vijay is punished and then cured; the in-laws' attempt to kill Rekha is foiled; and the 'divine' reunites the couple as well as the family). The turn to the 'divine' in this 'social,' I suggest, questions a secular, rational order that is dear to the Nehruvian state.

Like Satyavati, *Jai Santoshi Maa's* heroine, Rekha, who is the prime beneficiary and agent of the divine, is oppressed, abides by a conservative code (e.g. *pati is parmeshwar*, submission to in-laws) but nevertheless triumphs. While the film's title might be *Pati Parmeshwar*, its central character is not the husband but the devoted wife who accomplishes what the male hero normally does in a Hindi film – resolve problems and unite the family. Moreover, she attains success via a novel approach. Generally, the male hero of the dominant action genre of 1980s and the 'Avenging Woman' transgressed the laws of the state, pursuing a course of violence to achieve their ends. The female characters in contemporaneous middle and art cinema often flouted dominant social norms governing community, kinship and marital relations. In contrast, Rekha stays within the *lakshman-rekha*[17] and achieves her goals through self-abnegation (fasting, prayer, and nonviolent persuasion through stellar behavior).

The Tribunal felt the place of the 'divine' was not the contemporary social but the 'golden' past. Opposing Nayyar's contention that Rekha's actions were analogous with Sita, Savitri and Anasuya, they argued that:

> The conduct of their husbands was exemplary and therefore the love and affection of the wives was also ideal. They were not servile to their husbands. But it is a historical fact that in the last hundreds of years women lost their identity and were treated as chattel. However, in this century great strides have been made in this country to give women their due place.
>
> (The Film Certification Appellate Tribunal Order 1987)

17. In some versions of the *Ramayan*a, *Lakshman-rekha* refers to a line drawn by Lakshman around the dwelling he shared with his brother Ram and Rama's wife Sita in the forest. The line was meant to protect Sita, while he was away searching for Ram. In modern usage, it is viewed as a strict social boundary or limit which is crossed at one's peril.

The Tribunal's narrative constructs a golden age of exemplary marital behavior from which there is a fall and the modern state, through laws and policies, is addressing this fall by providing women with agency. In a writ petition to the Bombay High court, Nayyar challenged the Tribunal's views:

> The Tribunal's order incorrectly states that the husband of Sita and Anasuya showed exemplary conducts. Rama, husband of Sita, on mere hearsay, compelled her to go through Agni-Preeksha and then later when he was crowned the King and ascended the throne, banished his wife Sita, who was pregnant, to the forest on the mere unproven words of a washerman. Sita obeyed willingly. Anasuya's husband in Hindu mythology was a drunkard and a womanizer. He finally contracted leprosy which incapacitated him totally. Despite all their husband's misdeeds and behaviour, their respected wives Sita and Anasuya behaved in a manner comparable to that of Rekha which the Tribunal considers not only servile but as a sign of weakness.
>
> (The High Court of Judicature at Bombay, Writ Petition No. 38 of 1988, 6 January)

Nayyar disputes the Tribunal's linear narrative which enshrines and seals tradition, robbing it of any political force. He argues that Hindus Gods were not 'ideal' to begin with; they were unfaithful and unreliable, needing to be cajoled. He likens Rekha to Hindu goddesses, suggesting that both needed to employ traditional tactics to deal with errant partners and marital difficulties. Unlike the Tribunal, he underscores that tradition can be the site of female agency.

Bombay High Court

Unbowed by the Tribunal's judgment, Nayyar, with the support of the Film Federation,[18] petitioned against the decision in Bombay's High Court, alleging that the CBFC and Tribunal's orders had been discriminatory and unconstitutional. After watching the film, reviewing the script and listening to the submissions and arguments on both sides, Justice S.C. Justice Pratap ruled that 'the total ban of this film is not justified and that with cuts, deletions, substitutions and modifications, the film well-deserves to be granted a 'U' certificate' (The High Court of Judicature at Bombay, Writ Petition No. 38 of 1988, 10 May 1988). Justice Pratap justified this ruling by quoting official figures who had emphasized that cinematic representations needed to be 'true to Indian culture; true to Indian tradition; and true to Indian womanhood' (The High Court of Judicature at Bombay, Writ Petition No. 38 of 1988, 10 May 1988). In Justice Pratap's view, the representation of Rekha had abided by these strictures:

> Rekha has been true to all these. She exemplifies the inner strength and character of Indian womanhood. She asserts and ultimately succeeds in bringing down her husband to the path of righteousness and virtue. It is the triumph and victory of Indian womanhood, notwithstanding the ups and downs of matrimonial life and the storms which it not infrequently passes through.
>
> (The High Court of Judicature at Bombay, Writ Petition No. 38 of 1988, 10 May 1988)

18. The Film Federation of India (FFI) was formed in 1951. It is apex body of the film industry; it negotiates and intervenes of the behalf on members of the industry as required.

In choosing to stay with her husband, Justice Pratap felt that Rekha had preserved and abided by 'traditions of Hindu society which believes in maintaining the sanctity and piousness inherent in the sacred institution of marriage' (The High Court of Judicature at Bombay, Writ Petition No. 38 of 1988, 10 May 1988). In Justice Pratap, Nayyar had finally found a sympathetic reader who concurred with his view that Rekha was an agent who had been able to reform her husband via devotion. Like Nayyar, Justice Pratap felt that the decision to ban the film had been unduly 'harsh,' 'discriminatory,' and 'arbitrary,' especially when compared to films 'of recent and current origin and release' which had been granted certificates such as *Shahenshah* (1988), *Kab Tak Chup Rahungi* (1988) and *Aaage ki Soch* (1988). (The High Court of Judicature at Bombay, Writ Petition No. 38 of 1988, 10 May 1988).

In supporting Nayyar, Justice Pratap strayed beyond his juridical parameters into the CBFC's and the Tribunal's domains, as evidenced by the CBFC's subsequent appeal against his decision. For example, he asked Nayyar to make changes in the film, and then screen the film for select members of the CBFC. Suspicious of the constitution of previous committees as well as 'the mode and manner of reaching a decision,' Justice Pratap 'prepared a list of seven persons from the [CBFC] panel and gave liberty to the [CBFC] to select any five to see the film and forward their opinion to the Court' (The High Court of Judicature at Bombay, Writ Petition No. 38 of 1988, 10 May 1988). Upon receiving these decisions, Justice Pratap, 'out of deference to the views of the committee members', directed further cuts and ruled that the film be issued a 'UA' certificate as a 'compromise' since an equal number of members had recommended 'A,' 'U' and 'UA' certificates (The High Court of Judicature at Bombay, Writ Petition No. 38 of 1988, 10 May 1988). In entering the domain of the CBFC, Justice Pratap unwittingly questioned formal state divisions which designated that censorship was specifically the duty of the censors.

After rendering his judgment, Justice Pratap offered the following 'off-the-bench' observation that:

> unlike many in this modern world always turning westward for everything, the heroine Rekha is not colour blind to basic Hindu culture, heritage and traditions. She exemplifies the inner strength and character of Indian womanhood. Her commitment to marriage is total and supreme and she honours it in full measure in the true spirit of Hindu ethos. Being a rich father's daughter, she was not helpless. She need not have accepted and passed through what is part and parcel of the web of Hindu life … A true *saubhagyavati*, she steadfastly holds on to the higher values which, in many a matrimonial home today, are seen falling by the wayside.
>
> (The High Court of Judicature at Bombay, Writ Petition No. 38 of 1988, 10 May 1988)

Justice Pratap constructs a dichotomy between the East and the West, one in which the East is morally superior; moreover, he defines and glorifies 'Hindu' tradition. I would like to draw attention to the context in which this decision was rendered, namely, the rise of Hindu nationalism. The Sangh Parivar[19] advocated nation-building by mobilizing Hindu tradition. In this discourse, women were largely defined as wives and mothers,

19. Sangh Parivar refers to a family of Hindu organizations which promote Hindu nationalism. They include the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

dutiful and sacrificing who deployed their *matrishakti* (literally, power of motherhood) in service of family, community and the nation.

20. The translation is mine.

Modifications

After viewing *Pati Parmeshwar*, Justice Pratap '*directed* several cuts, deletions, modifications, substitutions and modifications both in the scenes and in the scripts/dialogues' (The High Court of Judicature at Bombay, Writ Petition No. 38 of 1988, 10 May)[my emphasis]. In ordering these revisions, one could say Justice Pratap was contributing to the film's direction and editing and therefore, participating in a creative endeavor. Simply put, Justice Pratap's actions could be read both as authoritative and creative, contributing to the production of the film. I would like to underscore the porous nature of practices. In this case, creativity was not the sole domain of the director.

In a scene added to the film at Justice Pratap's direction, Rekha has a conversation with her conscience/soul about her husband's wayward ways and manages to convince the conscience/soul that her decision to save her marriage is the correct one. Justice Pratap suggested that this addition highlighted 'Rekha's determination to save her marriage without losing self-respect' (The High Court of Judicature at Bombay, Writ Petition No. 38 of 1988, 10 May). Interestingly, in the final version of the film, this scene is changed; specifically, the roles of the conscience/soul and Rekha are reversed as the conscience/soul seeks to convince Rekha to save her marriage. The scene takes place after Rekha discovers that Vijay is enamored of Tara. The sequence is a compilation of ten cuts and a fade out, which is followed by another twenty cuts and a fade out. The fast-paced cuts supplemented by the wailing and mourning violins on the sound track highlight Rekha's agitated and distraught state of mind. The agitation conveyed through film grammar is verbalized in the exchange which takes place between Rekha and her conscience/soul. Initially, Rekha appears stunned by the magnitude of Vijay's betrayal, but her grief and shock quickly turn into anger as she vows not to put up with such abusive behavior. The camera cuts to her conscience/soul which appears in the mirror. Wearing a simple white *sari*, a red *bindi* on her forehead and a *mangalsutra* around her neck, Rekha's mirror image appears calm and firm as she asks about Rekha's course of action. Rekha stridently replies that she plans to leave Vijay if he does not stop pursuing Tara. In a horror-struck voice, the conscience/soul demands, 'What! you'll ask for a **DIVORCE!**' (*Pati Parmeshwar*, Madan Joshi, 1989).[20] On the soundtrack, the word 'divorce' reverberates seven times as the camera zooms in and out of Rekha's face, as if striking her, and the audience, with the force of the word. The sound track issues loud claps of thunder, constructing divorce as a calamity.

The thought of walking out on Vijay disturbs Rekha, but she still manages to retain some composure, asserting 'Why not? I'm a modern woman. If my husband behaves this way, then the law has given me the right to demand divorce' (*Pati Parmeshwar*, Madan Joshi, 1989). Her conscience/soul concedes, 'Of course, the law has given you this right but after marriage, you become a wife and your duty is to your husband' (*Pati Parmeshwar*). The camera cuts to Rekha as she interjects, 'I'm not willing

to believe in such a notion of duty, one which doesn't treat men and women equally.' (*Pati Parmeshwar*) In the exchange which follows, the conscience/soul challenges Rekha's understanding of gender by defining a 'good' Hindu woman's role:

Conscience/Soul:	Our religion gives much more respect to women – as it should. After all, a woman gives life; she gives birth to man and that's why she's worshipped. Our many temples in which goddesses are worshipped testify to the respect accorded to women in this land.
Rekha:	They are worshipped only in temples, in the form of mothers – not in the form of wives.
Conscience/Soul:	After all, it is the wife who becomes the mother.
Rekha:	But I want my rights as a wife from my husband. I'm not a weak woman and I won't suffer any abuse from my husband.
Conscience/soul:	To suffer defeat silently is weakness but to warn the person who's abusing you, to fight this abuse with the strength of your mind – and through non-violence to see the end of this abuse, is not weakness but power.
Rekha:	Power? How is that power?
Conscience/soul:	Why is a woman compared to Earth? Because, a woman possesses the same positive attributes as the Earth. The Earth endures so much – plowing, wars, tornadoes, earthquakes, but she doesn't rebel, she doesn't ask for a divorce. She gives human beings so much. Even after such abuse, she gives human beings space to live, to flourish and even her lap to die. That is the victory of the Earth. You also must be victorious by bringing your straying husband to the right path.

(*Pati Parmeshwar*, Madan Joshi, 1989)

In splitting Rekha, the filmic narrative reproduces a dichotomy between self-interest (i.e., rights) and self-sacrifice which, as Majumdar notes, is central to the history of women's emancipation (Majumdar 2002). Self-sacrifice yields to self-interest as Rekha is convinced that, as a good Hindu woman, she must try to save her marriage. It is notable that this dichotomy is repeated in the contrast between the heroine Rekha and the vamp/courtesan Tara, a ubiquitous trope in Hindi cinema. While Rekha chooses a life of self-abnegation, Tara attempts to avenge the wrongs committed against her family. Once more self-sacrifice triumphs as Tara stops her quest for vengeance once she discovers, from her father, that its real victim is the devoted Rekha.

In the exchange between Rekha and her conscience/soul, both Rekha and the audience are invited to view the image in the mirror, which advocates self-sacrifice, as an ideal representation and to emulate this

representation. For the audience, this exchange is further complicated by the mediating technologies of the screen and the camera. I suggest there is a parallel between the mirror in which Rekha sees her conscience/soul and the screen on which the audience witnesses this scene. The audience is invited not only to view the image in the mirror as ideal, but also to see this film as an ideal representation of Hindu tradition, or in Nayyar's words, as 'one of the cleanest, most acceptable, most respectable, and most noble movies produced in Bombay in recent years' (Nayyar 1987). This reading is bolstered by the fact that the objections raised by the CBFC and the Tribunal are included in this carefully scripted dialogue. As Rekha voices their objections by asserting her right as a modern woman, the conscience/soul counters them by reminding her of supposedly more important roles, namely, as a Hindu woman, wife and mother.

As the story of *Pati Parmeshwar*'s trials is (re)presented in this dialogue, the members of the CBFC suffer defeat not only within the space of the courtroom but also within the diegetic space. In fact, it seems possible even to trace the successive moments which together constitute this defeat by tracing the 'but' which at once marks the relation between the law and its negation; between the mirror and Rekha; and, as such, between the audience and the screen. 'But' as pivot point, as point and granule of resistance, is worn away, and with its dissolution, the audience by extension ceases to utter the formal 'but' which is the mark, perhaps, of its suspension of belief, the mark of its knowledge of its own fantasy.[21]

21. I wish to thank Adam Sitze for making this point.

CBFC's Appeal

The CBFC appealed against Justice Pratap's decision, requesting the Bombay High Court to review the case. They contended that the 'judgment and order dated 22nd June 1988 passed by His Lordship Mr. Justice S.C. Justice Pratap is arbitrary, illegal, unconstitutional and in excess of his jurisdiction' (The High Court of Judicature at Bombay, Writ Petition No. 38 of 1988, 12 July). Elaborating on this claim, they stated that this court had no jurisdiction either to constitute a committee to examine the film or 'to grant such certificate on the basis of certain cuts suggested' by Justice Pratap. Instead, Justice Pratap should have followed procedure and returned the film to the CBFC for reassessment. Justice Pratap's decision, they argued, contravened the film censorship guidelines as well as the Constitution of India:

> The learned judge failed to appreciate that to picturize a married woman in ignoble servility and to glorify the said servility as a quality of the woman is indecent and immoral, and to take into account the contemporary standards of the country and the people in India and the values and standards of the society and so also the needs for social change and improvement of status of women, as contemplated under Article 19 (2) of the Constitution of India.
>
> (The High Court of Judicature at Bombay, Writ Petition No. 38 of 1988, 12 July)

In disregarding the judgment of the Tribunal, Justice Pratap had undermined the status and work of a 'constitutional body.'

Bombay High Court Justices Agarwal and Lentin, who considered CBFC's appeal, had diametrically opposite views of the case. While Justice Agarwal questioned the constitutional validity of guideline 2 (iva), Justice Lentin asserted that it fell squarely within the scope of 'indecency and morality' as stated in the Cinematograph Act and the Constitution of India. Justice Agarwal claimed that even if one accepted the constitutional validity of this guideline, Rekha's depiction did not violate it. He argued that her 'servility is not "ignoble"; rather, it is "enobling"' as it abides by Hindu tradition:

> Justice Agarwal sees the film as an exaltation of traditional Hindu values. He appears to read into the guideline a caveat saying that it is to be applied to films about Hindu tradition which are shown to Hindu audiences.
>
> (Jaising and Wolfe 2006: 132)

Conversely, Lentin maintained that Rekha's portrayal contravened guideline 2(iva) and that the film was not 'responsive to social change' as stated in the guidelines. Due to this difference of opinion, the case was sent to a third judge, Justice P.S. Shah. While Justice Shah concurred with Justice Lentin with respect to the constitutional validity of guideline 2(iva), he disagreed with Justice Lentin's interpretation of Rekha's depiction. Justice Shah declared, 'because the film was seen by a primarily Hindu audience, there was nothing wrong with Rekha's "ignoble servility"' (Jaising and Wolfe 2006: 130–131). Thus, the CBFC's appeal was unsuccessful.

The limited scholarship on *Pati Parmeshwar* has focused on the judgments of the Bombay High Court. It concurs with Justice Lentin's views and draws our attention to the communal nature of Justices Shah and Agarwal's judgments which construct a homogeneous, majority 'Hindu audience' who share cultural attitudes and viewing practices (Gangoli 2007; Jaising and Wolfe 2006: 127–137; Stewart 1995: 253–274; Vasudev 1995: 7–8) By extending this scholarship, we see that the screen and the theatre transform into political sites for the (un)democratic play of majority and minority politics. This scholarship, however, fails to examine the film and other materials related to the case, thereby, overlooking alternative constructions of women's agency and neglecting an analysis of the mechanisms of censorship.

The comments and decisions of the Examining Committee, Revising Committee, Film Appellate Tribunal, and Bombay High Court judges reveal competing visions of the Indian state, even among those who reside within its ambit. These visions underscore that the state is not a monolithic entity. Rather, it is the unequal play of these opposing and overlapping visions that produces the state. Many of the officials' statements concur with the project of the modern Nehruvian state, to which economic and social development were central. In this project, tradition was largely associated with caste and gender inequalities as well as religious excesses, which were viewed as regressive; thus, tradition needed to be regulated and/or overcome so that it did not become an obstacle to progress. On the other hand, other officials such as the minority within the Revising Committee and some of the judges disagreed with the place allotted to tradition in the Nehruvian vision. They viewed tradition as a

commitment to cultural heritage, religious beliefs and the sanctity of marriage and family. They concurred with Nayyar's arguments that Hindu tradition was not opposed to progress, development or women's agency; Hindu women, while embodying tradition, also mobilized it to empower themselves. These views drew upon and contributed to the rising discourses of Hindu nationalism and communalism.

The CBFC attempted to appeal against the Bombay High Court's decision to certify the film and take the case to the Supreme Court in order to settle the question of jurisdiction:

> …the case involves a substantial question of law of general importance regarding the powers of the Film Censor Board to arrive at a conclusion as per the guidelines and the limits of the judicial scrutiny of this judgment made by Tribunal on facts presided over by Retired Chief Justice. Hence, this question of interference by the High Court in the discretion and finality of findings given by the Tribunal is often coming before the courts. So to have the law on the subject crystallized finally, a decision by the highest court is necessary.
>
> (CBFC 1988: Ref: U.O. No. 3545 Vol. II)

However, they were unsuccessful and the film was granted a 'UA' certificate with appropriate cuts and substitutions as recommended by the *ad hoc* committee convened by Justice Pratap. There is some documentation suggesting that Bikram Singh, the chairperson of the CBFC, was asked to resign in 1989 partly because the CBFC had pursued the *Pati Parmeshwar* case. However, he could simply have been a casualty of coalition politics and a change in the government, bringing in their wake, shifting views about what do to with cinema and the CBFC (Pillai 1989). During the period that *Pati Parmeshwar* was examined, the CBFC was directed by Delhi to pursue issues related to the representation of women. When the central government changed, they were informally advised to stop pursuing the *Pati Parmeshwar* case. However, the CBFC flouted the new directive and followed the earlier policy, stating that they did not receive this new directive in writing (CBFC 1988: Ref: U.O. No. 3545 Vol. II). I propose that coalition politics (which perhaps enables such subversive challenges), is not a sign of a weak state. Rather, it underscores that the state is neither a monolithic nor a fixed entity.

In reading the 'failure' of the CBFC and the Tribunal, I suggest we take into account their unusual decisions which drew attention to a 'normal' representation, namely, the self-sacrificial woman. In questioning this representation and reading it as 'the glorification of woman's subjugation', the CBFC and the Tribunal added to discourses on the role of women, matrimony and family relations. Thus, we can see that the act of regulating representations has an impact on broader areas. Such micro-practices engender decisions which are supported and challenged both within and beyond the ambit of the state, thereby contributing to state formation.

Alternative Reading

The trail of documents in the *Pati Parmeshwar* case, by focusing almost exclusively on Rekha's depiction, sediments the discourse on the film around the issue of women's subjugation. To unsettle the focus of these documents,

I turn to an alternative site for reading this film by examining the role of the other major female character, Tara/Durga. In his appeal to the Tribunal, Nayyar draws our attention to Tara/Durga:

> The film does not, as alleged, ignore women's independence and sense of identity. In fact there is a parallel character to Rekha, that of Tara alias Durga, whose defiance to male chauvinism is strongly shown in the film. . . . Both [Rekha and Tara] are educated and are of independent mind. One chooses marital bliss and the other vengeance . . . . I emphasize strongly that the two women in my film are neither subjugated, nor servile and are not treated ignobly.
>
> (Nayyar 1987)

In his judgment, Justice Pratap also refers to Tara:

> Coming to the mujra girl Tara, she is strongly motivated by her fully justified desire for revenge. She's out to avenge her betrayal. She is bold, independent and strong-willed. There is no question at all of any servility on her part. On the contrary, by her charm and will, it is she who renders Vijay total servile to her. And, what is more, she gives him nothing in return.
>
> (The High Court of Judicature at Bombay, Writ Petition No. 38 of 1988, 22 June 1988)

Pati Parmeshwar deploys the familiar trope of the heroine and the vamp/courtesan. However, unlike her predecessors, Tara/Durga does not have a heart of gold but one filled with vengeance, gesturing to the Avenging Woman genre of the 1980s. Through her spectacular dances and sensuous performance, Tara/Durga overshadows Rekha, paralleling the prominence of Dimple Kapadia over Sudha Chandran. Both the character Tara/Durga as well as the star Dimple Kapadia, a single-mother of two daughters who separated from her famous husband and returned to work in the film industry, become important sites for assessing social norms such as marriage and family within and outside the diegetic space.

In the film, vengeance is arrested by self-sacrifice, a prominent feature of family melodrama, as Tara/Durga stops her pursuit of vengeance when she learns from her father that its victim is the devoted Rekha. I suggest that it is, in part, by overlooking the character of Tara that many of the officials conclude that *Pati Parmeshwar* is simply a film about women's subjugation and then, set out to regulate its representation. In questioning this reading of the film, Nayyar does offer an alternative construction of women's agency; however, his interpretation rests upon normative roles of wives and mothers for women, specifically, Hindu women—and overlooks figures like Tara/Durga and, by extension Dimple Kapadia, who challenge such notions.

(Un)spectacular Effects

While *Pati Parmeshwar* gained a lot of attention from the CBFC, the Tribunal and the courts, as attested to by the thick file of official documents, it passed unnoticed at the box office. In this case, the act of censorship did not mark *Pati Parmeshwar* as a desirable text; put simply,

prohibition did not produce desire. By ignoring this film, the Indian audiences were not necessarily rejecting patriarchal values, albeit some might have been. The rejection more likely had to do with the fact that the cast of the film was largely unappealing, besides Dimple Kapadia and the camerawork, as well as songs, were mediocre. Ironically, *Pati Parmeshwar* failed at performing a *traditional* Hindi film formula.

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Bollywood, Tibet, and the spatial and temporal dimensions of global modernity[1]

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Abstract

While Bollywood is established as global popular culture, its journey into Tibet has been an idiosyncratic and complex one. Unlike the well-known manifestations of transnational Bollywood, in Tibet, Bollywood is not underpinned by an Indian diaspora or indeed 'Islamicate'-based crossovers in the cultural and linguistic expression of romance. Furthermore, there is no legal import of Bollywood films or music into China's still protectionist cultural market, and zero attempts by Bombay producers to target China as yet.

This ethnographically-based article describes Bollywood in Tibet in live and recorded performing arts, analyzing in historical perspective the legal and illegal flows of people and goods, as well as other ties between Tibet and India and South Asia that drive this fashionable corner of Tibetan popular culture. This article also explores how Bollywood (and India) slot into the context of Chinese multiculturalism as an exotic and also erotic 'other'.

The article as a whole highlights the historical as well as the modern forces of globalization, seeing the roots of Bollywood in Tibet as lying in ancient ties between Tibet and India and also Nepal, as well as in modern tourism and trade. This points to the fluidity of cultural topographies and trajectories in the pre-modern world. The article also emphasizes how far the 'globalization' of Bollywood is due to specific regional and national issues, most notably, the nationalist project of the PRC which brought into being exile Tibet in India and Nepal as a kind of 'collateral damage'.

Keywords

Bollywood
contemporary Tibet
globalization
modernity
cultural topography
migration
media

Tibet's identity in the eyes of the world has long been defined by its ancient religious culture. However, modernity has also arrived in Tibet, even in many rural areas, with cassettes and VCDs,[2] pop music, nightclubs, television and a fast growing consumer culture. Popular music culture first began in Tibet in the early 1980s with karaoke bars and Taiwanese pop (Adams 1996) and then Tibetan appropriations of these in the late 1980s, most notably Dadon (Henrion-Dourcy 2005: 234–246). Then followed more of a big-vocal rock/pop trend drawing on models from mainland China represented most famously by the outstanding voice of Yadong. Most recently, since roughly the new millennium, 'global' culture has begun to be seen in Tibet, with boy and girl bands, R&B 'pop babe' style performers (most successfully Chungshol Dolma), and nightclub lineups whose highlights may include English language pop such as Britney Spears and Bollywood singing and/or dancing (Morcom 2007: 32–34).[3]

1. Unless stated otherwise, by 'Tibet' I am referring to all the Tibetan autonomous areas of the PRC, which consist of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), and parts of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan. I am grateful to both the Leverhulme Trust and the British Academy who supported fieldwork in Tibet, from 2004–2005 and 2006–2007

respectively, that contributed to this article. I would also like to express particular thanks to friends in Tibet who assisted my fieldwork both formally and informally. Given the sensitive nature of much of the article concerning connections with India and Nepal, I have been intentionally vague about sourcing some interviews and personal communications.

2. The Video CD (VCD), a compressed video format that fits onto a CD, is the preferred format for pop music in the whole of China.

3. See also Anon (2004: 53–93) for an overview of Tibetan popular music culture from post Cultural Revolution Tibet. By 'Bollywood' I am referring to the films, songs, stars and style of the star-cast Hindi film industry based in Mumbai. I have not seen any presence of South Indian or Pakistani films in Tibet.

4. Diehl includes a chapter on the relationship to Bollywood of the Tibetan exiles in her monograph on music in the refugee community of Dharamsala in India (2002: 101–143).

Given that Tibet is now so clearly in the modern world and Bollywood is one of the major forms of global culture today, it would seem obvious that it would be found in the Tibet of the twenty-first century. However, at the same time, Tibet is not typical of Bollywood's transnational journeys, which are mostly associated with Indian diaspora populations on the one hand, and/or the Muslim world on the other, where ideas of love, romance and honour, as well as the Persian and Arabic vocabulary of love (*Ishq*, *Mohabbat*, *Dil*, *Dard* etc.), form a strong common bond with Hindi films and film music. Tibetan Buddhism originated in India, but in terms of the musical and visual style, as well as wider ethos of secular performing arts culture, Bollywood is an alien world, and there are hardly any Persian or Arabic loan words in Tibetan language either. A large Tibetan refugee community exists in India and Nepal following the flight of the Dalai Lama to India in 1959. That the Tibetans in India and Nepal should have become acculturated to Bollywood is inevitable.[4] But with no linguistic or clear cultural context for Bollywood, it is not so obvious why Tibetans in Tibet, and indeed the majority Chinese population of the PRC, should be involved with this 'global' culture. Tibet and India may be next door, but the Sino-Indian border is strongly divisive, separating not just India and Tibet, but South Asia and East Asia. Tibet is a particularly sensitive area and Sino-Indian relations are still far from warm, and the only Indians in Tibet, generally speaking, are those on special pilgrimage packages to the remote area of Mount Kailash who have virtually no interaction with the general population. There are also very few Nepalis in Tibet, even though Sino-Nepalese relations are good. Although Tibet is one of the shortest journeys global Bollywood has made, it has in fact been one of the trickiest, and Bollywood's presence there is limited and also uneven. It is also important to note that in no way is Tibet, or indeed China, targeted by Bollywood film producers and music companies (as with Indian diaspora communities in western countries), and there is no legal import of Bollywood into China.

This article is a study of the idiosyncratic transnational migration of Bollywood to Tibet, and its place in musical culture there. It begins with an overview of the connections that historically linked the Tibetan and South Asian worlds, their transformation with the annexing of Tibet to China, and the changes that have ensued post the Cultural Revolution as China began to 'open up'. This contextualises Bollywood in Tibet both in terms of regional relations and what can be termed 'global' ones, and also in terms of history and modernity. Bollywood dance and music in contemporary Tibet is then examined in the form of both people and commodities, of embodied performance and mass media, and of the market or allure of Bollywood in Tibet and, to a certain extent, in China as a whole. This includes a focus on both legal and illegal mass media as they pertain to Bollywood, looking at the music industry, cassettes and VCDs as well as satellite television, mobile phones and the Internet. The movement of people is similarly examined, looking at tourism and trade as well as refugees. In the context of this spatial and temporal focus of Bollywood in Tibet, I address questions about the movement, mappings and topography of culture and global modernity.

The historical relationship of Tibet with India and Nepal

Most fundamental to the relationship between India and Tibet is the Indian origin of Tibetan Buddhism, illustrated by one of the words for India in Tibetan which is *phags yul* or 'sacred land'. This religious connection forms a kind of umbilical cord tying Tibet to India. The sacred geography of the Hindu and Buddhist world also links Tibet to India; for example, Mount Kailash is one of the holiest pilgrimage sites for Hindus as well as Buddhists, with special visa arrangements for Indians to visit Tibet specifically for pilgrimage to Mount Kailash reflecting this. In addition to these links of imagination and pilgrimage, Buddhist scholarly exchange also forms deep grooves joining Tibet to India. In addition to important places of learning existing in India (such as the Sarnath Buddhist Institute), the Tibetan script itself was derived from an Indian script in the eighth century in order to write down Buddhist scriptures in Tibetan language, and hence visibly resembles Devanagari which it is a relative of, especially in the *Üchen* version of the script. The religious relationship has also resulted in the migration of the ceremonial music *Gar* which is said to have come to Tibet from Ladakh (Norbu and Dhondup 1986; Trewin 1995, 2001).

The second important link between Tibet and India and the wider South Asian world has been trade, which has taken place for over millennia along a number of routes through the mountainous borderlands of India, Nepal and Tibet.[5] The religious bond, trade routes, and the presence of the British led to further connections between Tibet and India, for example, an émigré Tibetan community formed in Kalimpong, which was where the most important trading route from Tibet along the Jelep *la* ('Jelep pass') led, and many Tibetan aristocrats sent their children to the elite English medium schools that the region is still famous for.[6] *Ache Lhamo* opera troupes from Lhasa also used to perform in Kalimpong prior to the Chinese annexation of Tibet, as well as neighbouring Darjeeling, and also Sikkim (Henrion-Dourcy forthcoming: 107, 257 and 259; Norbu 2001: 142). Links through the first forms of electronic media also formed in this period, with All India Radio (AIR) and Hindi films received in Lhasa by the elite aristocratic community (Tashi Tsering personal communication, 2005), thus representing one of the earliest cross-border journeys of Hindi cinema. There are presumably many more cultural and also performing arts links between the South Asian and the Tibetan worlds from the early twentieth century, and before, that there is no documentation of. The boundaries of Tibet and India and Nepal have also been blurred by centuries of war and invasion, with the ebb and flow of various empires and rulers (Ladakh and Sikkim are now in India, as well as many areas inhabited by Tibeto-Burman peoples in the borderlands of Nepal and India), as are the boundaries of the Tibetan world with the Chinese and Muslim worlds to the East and North.[7]

The impact of the annexing of Tibet to the PRC on ties with India and Nepal

In the construction of the PRC and the annexing of Tibet, Chinese cultural and (multi)ethnic nationalism has sought to assert not just sovereign territory but also the strict correlation of culture and people with those geographical boundaries in ways that have been rigid and totalising, particularly during the socialist period up till the end of the Cultural Revolution, where it

5. Van Spengen provides an overview of Himalayan trade (1998). See Chakrabarti for trans-Himalayan trade during the period forthcoming. Goldstein and Shakya both discuss trade in their classic accounts of modern Tibetan history, see Goldstein in particular on the trade mission of 1947 (1989: 70, 85–86, and 570–601), and Shakya on the changes to Tibetan international trade relations under Chinese rule (1999, especially 119–121); T. Harris focuses on the contemporary situation, with the newly reopened trade route between Tibet and India (2008). See Bhasin (2005) for official documents relating to Sino-Nepal relations, including those concerning cross border trade with Tibet.

6. Norbu (2001: 142). See also T. Harris (forthcoming) and references for Kalimpong in Shakya (1999).

7. For example, there are audible links between vocal style of Tibetan nomads and (some) Chinese Muslims and other minority peoples in southwest China that bear witness to this.

was de facto supported by or channelled through (Chinese interpretations of) communist ideology. This resulted in the top-down application of 'modern Chinese' – which was effectively modern Han – (revolutionary) culture across the PRC, the legacy of which remains in terms of the infrastructure of state cultural institutions and aesthetics of 'modern' culture and the use of music and art as state propaganda.[8] The process of annexing Tibet to China has hence involved the forging of completely new ties between Tibet and China and the radical transformation of old ties in terms of political power and bureaucracy, infrastructure, trade, and culture.[9]

Also crucial to this nationalist project, however, was the weakening or severing of the older ties between Tibet and the South Asian and wider Himalayan worlds, which Tibet held independent of its relations with China. This was especially important when considered in the light of the fact that China's entire border with India (and also Nepal) lies in Tibet. The level and nature of Tibet's relatedness to India and China, and indeed its level of independence and autonomy, has shifted throughout history. However, in 1950 at least, the links of most of Tibet with India and also Nepal were far more extensive than those with China. There were the religious-based ties with India, which were especially significant in the context of the totally alien, atheistic ideology of socialism in China. Furthermore, Tibet had begun to appeal directly to India and Great Britain diplomatically *vis-à-vis* the Chinese attempts to establish rule over Tibet in the early twentieth century before the end of the Qing Dynasty (Goldstein 1989: 54; 58–62). Also, as Shakya states, 'over 70 per cent of Tibet's foreign trade was with India, while China accounted for less than 20 per cent: in terms of economy, Tibet was far more integrated with the Indian subcontinent [than China]' (Shakya 1999: 115). Indians and Nepalis enjoyed extra-territorial rights in Tibet, and China at that time had no direct contact with Nepal at all (Shakya 1999: 481, footnote 85). China began to sideline the Indian and Nepali traders that were in control of Tibet's exports and assert control over the Tibetan economy (Shakya 1999: 115). Treaties signed with India and Nepal in 1954 and 1956 shifted India's and Nepal's ties to China, not Tibet, including ending the extra-territorial rights, thus presenting Tibet as a part of China. With the flight of the Dalai Lama and the first large exodus of refugees to India in 1959, relations between India and China became strained, and with the war in 1962 they were totally severed and the border closed, with a tentative détente only beginning in 1991 (Shakya 1999: 436). Cross-border trade continued with Nepal,[10] although sidelined in comparison to trade with China, but ordinary Tibetans were not able to travel to Nepal until the end of the socialist period.

However, while the nationalist project of the PRC aimed to ensure that Tibet was welded to China, its sheer force and rigidity meant that in addition to the creation of a massive frontier between 'China's Tibet' and India in particular (but also Nepal), distinctly modern and very powerful ties between Tibet and India and Nepal were also inadvertently brought into being. The Dalai Lama fled to India in 1959, followed by the first wave of Tibetan refugees who settled in Nepal and India, then the next wave followed from the late 1960s as the Tibetan rebellion in Mustang in Nepal started to come to an end (Tibetan Justice Center 2002: 30–32).[11] This led to the formation of not just an exile community in India and Nepal of over 150,000 Tibetans, but an exile government and administration; in fact, a kind of Tibetan nation state in

8. Chinese nationalism has always recognized the minorities, defining the Chinese nation as existing of the 56 'nationalities' that include the Han majority and the minorities. However, as has been well illustrated, the distinctive identities of the minorities are constructed and mediated through Han aesthetics, resulting in difference that is contained in and subordinated to the Han majority, rather than genuine, autonomous difference. See Anon (2004: 7-52) for an overview of the socialist/nationalist ideology of the PRC and its impact on Tibetan performing arts, and Morcom (2008) for an examination of the creation of a new, pan-Tibetan identity in performing arts that connected Tibetan culture centripetally to that of China. For studies of the transformation of the performing arts of other minorities under Chinese nationalism/socialism see Rees (2000: 10-27, 130-169), and R. Harris (2004: 156-93). See Morcom (2007) for an analysis of the appropriation of the 'state style' in twenty-first century Tibet in non-state contexts'.

9. See Shakya (1999) on political power, bureaucracy and, to some extent, trade. See Anon (2004: 13–52) on musical culture in particular.

10. See documents from this period in Bhasin (2005).

exile with its own form of ethnic and cultural nationalism including a constitution.[12] Rather than being water-tight, the sealing of Tibet to the PRC in a manner and scale that had never existed in the old world of empires led to a rupture that produced an unprecedented flow of people from Tibet to India, massively deepening the groove first formed by the far more limited and diffuse movement in the 'old' world of people for the purposes of, broadly speaking, religion and trade. Furthermore, with the Dalai Lama in India and many Tibetan families divided between Tibet, India and Nepal, there is a sense of India as not just the motherland of Buddhism but also a kind of home or extension of home.[13] This has resulted in a very complex and, in some ways, inverted relationship of home and exile/diaspora, space and nation, which is central to the existence of Bollywood in Tibet. However, it was only after some two-way movement (legal and illegal) began in terms of people and media between India, Nepal and Tibet after the end of the Cultural Revolution that this could develop into actual cultural migration.[14]

Tibet's relationship with the South Asian world as China 'opens up'

With the death of Mao in 1976, the Cultural Revolution came to an end, and China began to embark on a path of market reforms and 'opening up' that has seen it connecting increasingly to the world in the form of global capitalism, generating an immense economic boom. Significant (though highly uneven) economic growth did not reach Tibet till around 2000, when the state started to pour large amounts of money into Tibet under the 'develop the west' campaign (TIN 2000; Fischer 2005). However, significant changes occurred from the 1980s that reconnected it in places directly with the South Asian and wider outside world, in the form of movement of people and media.

Although the border with Nepal remained open throughout the socialist period in China, with China and Nepal maintaining good relations, trade was limited by general poverty and by the increasing restrictions and eventual outlawing of private commerce by socialism. In addition, tourism was non-existent. Trade began to increase once business started to get underway, and was further encouraged by opening more points along the Nepal-Tibet/China border for trade, and increasing the list of tradable items (though not to include cultural products).[15] The majority of Tibetans are denied passports and are unable to travel abroad, though in recent years special papers to visit Nepal have been available for purposes of even petty business. Once in Nepal, Tibetans are able to cross over the open border to India. In this way, Nepal acts as an 'air-lock' enabling Tibetans to travel to India, and to return to Tibet. Tibetans in Nepal with Nepali passports are able to visit and trade with Tibet, and Tibetans with foreign passports also began to return to visit Tibet (largely via China) from the 1980s.[16] With the end of the Cultural Revolution, policy changes led overall to a much better situation for Tibetans as regards cultural identity and livelihood,[17] and significant numbers of exiled Tibetans returned to Tibet.

Tourism via Nepal has been one of the most important gateways between Tibet and the South Asian and wider world. Tourism from Nepal began from around 1984,[18] and was facilitated from around 1987 by the start of an air link between Kathmandu and Lhasa.[19] The majority of western tourism to Tibet goes through Nepal (though the unrest in Nepal

11. Shakya describes the Mustang rebel base and the CIA involvement (1999: 282–286, 359–364).

12. See details on the website of the Tibetan Government in Exile http://www.tibet.com/. (Accessed 23 June 2008).

13. The Dalai Lama is frequently referred to in songs as parents, or the meaning of the Dalai Lama is interpreted from references to parents. The Dalai Lama is also frequently imagined in cosmic terms, most commonly as the sun, with the *Panchen Lama* the moon. See Anon for a discussion of protest songs in Tibet, which include (due to the state's policy) those in praise of the Dalai Lama (2004: 137–178).

14. Diehl addresses these issues throughout her monograph of music in Dharamsala from the point of view of the exile community (as opposed to Tibetans in Tibet), including a specific discussion of the 'spatial coordinates' of the exile Tibetans *vis a vis* China, India and the West (2002: 26–29). See also Slobin's discussion of diaspora (2003).

15. See documents relating to trade in Bhasin (2005: 3369–3469).

16. This has mostly been Tibetans with foreign passports visiting the substantial eastern parts of Tibet that lie outside the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) which have the same rules for visitors as mainland China. Visiting the TAR is more complicated for

Tibetans and foreigners too.

17. Serious problems do persist, in particular due to control over religion and Chinese immigration, and there have been heavy waves of outright protests both in 1987–1989 and also 2008, as well as a myriad smaller incidents of dissent.

18. See 'Report on the promotion of tourism between Nepal and the Tibetan region of China', Kathmandu, 7 September 1984, which cites 'readiness' from the Chinese to open up the Kodari-Lhasa and Jumla-Mansarowar roads (to access Mount Kailash) for tourism (Bhasin 2005: 3555–3556).

19. See 'Report on the signing of the Kathmandu-Lhasa air services', Kathmandu, 26 August 1987 (Bhasin 2005: 3556–3557).

20. See the China-India joint document signed on 14 January 2008 http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-01/14/content_7422097.htm. (Accessed 24 June 2008.) See Zee News (19 January 2007), reporting that India had proposed the opening of the road from Ladakh to Tibet for trade and tourism.

in recent years has caused more to channel through China), where there is no language problem for westerners since English is widely spoken. Many returned Tibetan exiles are also involved (because they have good English language skills and often have close contacts in Nepal). There are continued efforts to introduce more Chinese guides and to restrict Tibetan guides (especially returned-exiles), though most western tourists greatly prefer the latter out of sympathy to the Tibetan cause (which attracts many to Tibet in the first place), and the wish to be shown Tibet by Tibetans.

In this way, substantial legal and semi-legal flows of people between India and Tibet, as well as Nepal and Tibet, have begun since China has 'opened up' – in addition to the continuing illegal flows of refugees. These increasing networks, or veins of interaction, with South Asia and exile Tibet are crucial to the spread of Bollywood in terms of embodied performance and markets, and also media – though pirate media networks also operate via mainland China and the Chinese diaspora, as discussed below. With plans to build a Tibet-Nepal rail link, links with South Asia could expand massively in the future, though unrest in Tibet can at any time freeze tourism and possibly trade links, as seen in 2008.

Officially, a détente between India and China began in 1991, seeing trade resume between the two countries. Cross-border trade, however, only began in earnest in 2006 with the opening of the *Nathu la* (*Nathu* 'pass') from Sikkim, and only for limited trade, not tourism. Apart from the special arrangements for Indians to cross the border in certain places for pilgrimage to Mount Kailash and petty trade via the Shipku pass from Himachal Pradesh that had began earlier, this represented the first opening of the Sino/Tibetan-Indian border since 1962. With trade between India and China increasing exponentially, and general relations also rapidly warming, there could be a lot more direct contact between India and Tibet, and there has been talk of opening up *Nathu la* to tourism, and/or possibly opening up another of the old trade and pilgrimage routes between Tibet and India.[20]

In terms of media too, changes have enabled new connections with the South Asian and wider world. The lifting of restrictions on private ownership and commerce, and the slow and still very uneven (in the case of Tibet especially) generation of wealth since the Cultural Revolution, have enabled a music business to emerge in Tibet– a popular music culture based on a market of recorded music commodities (Morcom 2008). Satellite television and, more recently, the Internet and mobile phones have also opened up the world in new ways to many Tibetans.

Bollywood in Tibet: media, markets and live performance

Mass-mediated Bollywood

Although China is 'opening up' to global capitalism, its cultural market remains strongly protectionist due to the state's keen awareness of the link of culture and identity, and only limited cultural products are distributed legally in China which have been given approval by the Ministry of Culture (Wang 2003: 66–67). While some Hollywood films have gained legal permission for distribution in China, Bollywood films and film music have not. However, these stringent rules are practically offset by the rampant, 'Manchester' style capitalism found in China which has led to a massive 'shadow' economy, where fake, counterfeit and pirate goods – including

specifically cultural products such as films and music – are manufactured in vast quantities for domestic consumption as well as export.[21] The level of manufacture of Bollywood films and music in China is nothing like that of Hollywood. However, it is not insignificant either, especially in the Muslim Northwest (Harris 2007/2008). The Hindi film industry is not, as yet, tackling piracy in China, but is aware of it.[22] However, with no arrangements yet made for legal distribution of Bollywood in China (which may be a sensitive issue considering the still not entirely warm relations of India and China), all manufacture and distribution of Bollywood in China and Tibet is through illegal or unofficial channels.[23]

The main supplies of pirate Bollywood VCDs (and to a lesser extent now, cassettes) found in Tibet emanate from two sources.[24] The first is mainland China, reportedly Guangdong, which produces good quality, glossy VCDs with a large print run (obvious from the quality).[25] They are difficult to identify as pirated. However, for anyone who can read English and has knowledge of Hindi, the bizarre spelling is an instant giveaway, as seen in Figure 1. They consist of compilations of Hindi film song videos, apparently assembled

21. See in particular Mertha's study of intellectual property in China (2005). See also Morcom (2008) for a study of piracy in the context of the Tibetan music business.

22. The CEO of one big Bollywood producer I talked to in 2005 stated that their next target was China. However, when I communicated with him again in June 2008, he stated that they were at the moment concentrating their

Figure 1: Back of Guangdong-produced VCD.

resources on combating piracy in other places where they would see more success.

23. Because Bollywood and most other pirate music and films pose no political risk, there is little attempt to control them. As Mertha's study shows, the bureaucracy for dealing with piracy and other intellectual property rights infringements is highly ineffective (2005).

24. See Morcom (2008, in press) for a more detailed studied of the pirate networks.

25. This information is based on interviews with a range of music producers and retailers in Tibetan areas of China and also those who deal with Tibetan music in Chengdu. See Morcom (2008) for an ethnographic

from the films by the pirates. These VCDs appear to be produced by the same networks that produce pirate copies of other global music such as English language pop and possibly films. They are distributed in mainstream Chinese music shops, not just Tibetan ones.

While this circuit serves possibly the whole of the PRC, a pirate network of Chinese Hui Muslims produces Hindi film compilations on VCD and cassette, as well as local Tibetan and exile-Tibetan music for Tibetan consumption (Morcom 2008: 270–271). This Hui network is based in Gansu and also Qinghai on the northeast fringe of Tibet (Amdo), but also has duplication and distribution facilities in Lhasa (See map of Tibet in Figure 2). Hui-made pirate copies of Bollywood are instantly distinguishable from the Guangdong ones since they are of extremely poor quality, with no attempt to pass off as original copies. They are very much local production. The pirate Bollywood song compilations this network produces appear to be made in or around Lhasa only, as are the similar pirate copies of exile-Tibetan music (non-political songs). They are found in large quantities in Lhasa, but in only small, sporadic amounts in eastern and north-eastern Tibet where I visited, with the Guangdong-produced Bollywood found in these places instead.[26] The Hui pirate production in Qinghai and Gannan does not include Bollywood, therefore, just Tibetan music, mostly Amdo. I was not able to talk with these traders in Lhasa, but it is likely that they are using Bollywood from Nepal, since Lhasa links legally with Nepal for trade and tourism, and it would be very easy for traders to cross the border from there carrying Bollywood films for 'personal consumption'. Alternatively, they may simply juggle and repackage Bollywood compilations made in Guangdong.

These pirate Bollywood copies fuel most of the performing culture of Bollywood in Tibet, where it is necessary for at least professional performance in nightclubs to have a VCD, CD or cassette of the music to be

Figure 2: Map of Tibet © Tibetinfonet. Used by permission.

performed. Before these sources existed, Bollywood songs and films, and also highly political exile music, were brought into Tibet by individual Tibetans. The Hui make pirate copies of non-political Tibetan exile music, and the music that is too political for them to sell still enters via individuals acting in a private capacity.[27]

Two further important sources of Bollywood in Tibet are satellite television and the Internet. In China, all broadcast media is controlled by the state. However, satellite television is very widespread in certain areas and people are able to view large numbers of channels from across the world (the Middle East, India, US, UK etc). This is not expressly forbidden, but not allowed either. Satellite dishes were common in towns, and also areas outside towns (though not very remote areas), in the Tibetan areas I visited in Gansu and Sichuan in 2005 and 2006, as shown in Figure 3. The paraphernalia for setting up

Figure 3: Satellite dish installed in a home in rural eastern Tibet outside the TAR.

study of the music business in Tibet. There may be a range of groups producing these VCDs, but they are referred to as one category here, in the absence of further information.

26. This was the case in the places I visited in Gannan and Kandze prefectures and also Xining and Chengdu. These copies were not to be seen in Nagchu either, but the Guangdong-made copies were, suggesting that at the moment, the Hui-produced Bollywood is very much Lhasa-based. It may be found in Shigatse and further towards the Nepalese border or South Tibet, where there are many Tibetans with links to India. In Xinjiang, where there is almost certainly the highest consumption of Bollywood in the PRC, Bollywood (and quite likely songs and movies from Pakistan) comes directly over the border from Pakistan, and there is also a lively market in Bollywood songs rerecorded into Uyghur language, with lyrics ingeniously arranged to match the lip-syncing of the original song sequences which they are then released with (R. Harris 2007/2008).

27. A political song about the Dalai Lama's sister, Jetsun Pema, and her work with refugee children in India was once released by accident, and later banned (Morcom 2008: 272). Individual traffic of Tibetan exile-music was very significant

satellite TV was openly available, as were local people (even at the village level) who knew how to install it. The Internet is still not very extensive in Tibet, but there are China-based musical chat rooms where Tibetans from inside and outside Tibet, as well as Chinese people, chat and play songs including Chinese language pop songs (sung by Tibetan and Chinese artistes), exile-Tibetan pop, and Bollywood. While chat rooms per se are not, as I am aware, illegal, chatting with exile Tibetans is more of a grey area, and listening to exile-Tibetan pop, including political songs, is not allowed. This is a sensitive but fascinating form of very direct connection between Tibetans inside and outside Tibet based on contemporary media culture.

In addition to songs from Hindi films, the films themselves are also available for hire in video shops in towns across Tibet and China. I saw many in towns I visited in eastern Tibet (Lithang and Daochen in Kandze prefecture, Sichuan province; Labrang, Machu and Gannan prefecture town in Gannan prefecture, Gansu Province), as well as in Xining and Chengdu.[28] Bollywood films appear to be a growing trend, with interest from the Chinese as much as Tibetan population. For example, a shopkeeper in Daochen stated in 2006 that they had only started stocking them in the last year. *Dushman* (1998) and apparently one other Hindi film have also been dubbed into Tibetan in Xining by the White Conch publishing house (*nub mtsho mi rigs sgra brnyan par skrun khang*), presumably without copyright.

All in all, Bollywood has a definite, though modest, presence in Tibet. It is sometimes heard in public spaces such as shops and markets in addition to nightclubs (described below). It is also possible to hear Tibetan exile-music playing in public space, most notably the songs of exile Tibet's top star Phurbu T. Namgyal, which swept Tibet in 2007. I heard one of his songs playing in a government telecom shop in Lhasa. I have also heard Bollywood ring tones from a number of Tibetan phones, twice from the phone of government cadres. However, as I discuss below in the context of markets, while Bollywood has become a part of the sounds of the Tibetan plateau, its distribution there is certainly not uniform.

Performed Bollywood

The first performance by a Tibetan that brought Hindi pop music into the realm of public culture in Tibet was a version of Alisha's 'Lover boy' (in fact a non-film pop song) by Chungshol Dolma. This video consists of live footage of Chungshol Dolma performing this song at Thangula nightclub in Chengdu probably around the late 1990s, where she was a staff artiste.[29] She dances with some Bollywood style moves and sings in Hindi, imitating the sounds of the words with a few minor mistakes belying the fact that she does not in fact know Hindi. She has not, by all reports, ever been to India or Nepal.[30] Her general image is that of a Tibetan, ethnic version of the 'pop babe', and in her latest album, a more mainstream Chinese version. However, she is certainly global in outlook. In addition to this Hindi song, the 'Enigma' flute sound is used in her song 'Leaving the Himalayas' which shot her to fame.[31]

The biggest Tibetan Bollywood hit in Tibet, however, has been the slick version of 'You are my Sonia' from *Kabhi Kushi Kabhi Gham* (2001) by the Amdo singer/dancer Samkho. It is almost identical to the original but rerecorded with Chinese lyrics in the verses and the Hindi lyrics in the

in the 1980s, with cassettes circulating in Lhasa of highly political exile-music such as *Rangtsen Zhonu* (Freedom Youth), one of the first and most successful Dharamsala Tibetan pop bands. Tibet's first pop star Dadon, and other singers at that time, were able to listen to and become influenced by this music (Henrion-Dourcy 2005: 236).

28. I did not check video hire shops in Lhasa and Nagchu for Hindi films as opposed to Hindi film music.

29. This song is available on You Tube, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eyU5lzq6lEc&feature=related (Accessed 24 June 08). Thangula is the most influential Tibetan nightclub, and has given exposure to, and in some cases actually launched in recording careers, some of Tibet's most famous artistes. See (Morcom 2008: 266–267) for more about Thangula.

30. I have unfortunately not had the opportunity to interview Chungshol Dolma, or the other famous Tibetan singers discussed in this article who have sung Bollywood songs.

31. This song is available on You Tube, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1DDY4ZfDkm0&feature=related (Accessed 24 June 08).

refrain, and with a female singer along with him. It was also popular in China. Samkho was trained as a dancer in the Chengdu Minorities University, Sichuan Province, and went on to teach there too, and has never been to India. While he is one of Tibet's best dancers, it is clear that as far as Bollywood dance is concerned, he, and the other performers in the video, are not familiar with the style, focussing on a few basic 'signature' Indian moves, such as the sideways head movement. The female artiste presents herself in *filmi* heroine mode, unlike Chungshol Dolma.

There was also another cover version of 'You are my sonia' done by Kelsang Metok and a male performer, both Thangula staff artists. While the male artist had stayed in Nepal/India for some years and performs many Hindi numbers at Thangula, Kelsang Metok, a well-known singer, has not been to India. Kelsang Metok is Tibet's keenest Bollywood-inspired performer overall, and she is seen wearing Indian clothes and/or jewellery with Tibetan clothes (traditional or modern) in many of the Tibetan or Chinese language songs of a recent album, *Tibet Angel* (given English title) (2006).[32] She also performed 'Ankhen khuli ho ya ho band' from *Mohabbatein* (2000) dressed up as a Hindi film heroine, adopting the characteristic *filmi* gestures and body language, as well as *gagra choli*, jewellery and *bindis* and three *sahelis* (female friends). The video gives Pinyin style transliterations of the Hindi words ('A ke gu li hu ya ku ben' for the first line) and it is clear from her rendition that she has learned the sounds and does not know Hindi.[33]

In all these examples, the star artistes (Chungshol Dolma, Samkho and Kelsang Metok) are Tibetans who have not been to India. Although I cannot comment on the appeal of Bollywood in these particular cases, the context in which Tibetans are drawn into Bollywood is explored below. Performances by artistes of the stature of Chungshol Dolma and Samkho in particular have certainly earned Bollywood a place in Tibetan popular culture.

Out of the relatively small number of non-famous Tibetans who perform solo or duet Bollywood song or dance live in nightclubs, the vast majority have either been to India or have a strong link there, and certainly a passion and sometimes obsession for Bollywood, since learning Bollywood song or dance well enough to perform solo requires determination and an exposure difficult to get in Tibet alone. I met a pair of girls in Lhasa who danced Bollywood with a real feeling for the style, for example, one who had spent four years in India and learned to dance, and the other who had learned from her. In contrast was a performance in a nightclub in Xining, where the performer apparently had little idea of Bollywood moves or dress and appeared to have had little enculturation into Bollywood. Dram, the town on the Nepali border where most Tibetan-Nepali trade and much of the tourist traffic passes, is a particularly important place for Bollywood dance. Hindi film songs are heard generally on the streets and in markets there, and Hindi film song performance is more common in nightclubs there as well. Dram is one of the towns on the Tibetan nightclub ('*nangma* bar') circuit around Lhasa, and many singers and dancers spend time working there. However, the solo performers I have met so far who really embody Bollywood convincingly have a strong link to India or Nepal.

Hindi songs are also sometimes performed in groups by the staff dancing troupes at nightclubs (*nangma* bars), who usually learn from VCDs,

32. See for example her Tibetan language song *skyi pai' glo pai' mi* ('Joyful Lopas') on You Tube http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ncn17vEHV-s. (Accessed 24 June 08).

33. This song is available on You Tube, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9YcqdIaipYc. (Accessed 24 June 08).

imitating dance moves. These troupes perform very much in the style of Tibetan dance created by the state and spread from the 1950s, now rearticulated with meanings of desirable modernity (Morcom 2007). They almost invariably perform Bollywood with a similar body language, which results in a performance that is stiff, unsensual and overly modest compared to original Bollywood. They also tend to have dead-pan facial expressions. Although the Bollywood-obsessed solo performers who have been to India or learned from someone there can be seen to be interacting with the style and ethos of Bollywood, none I have yet seen compare with the original. Bollywood's explosive energy, sensuality and seductiveness is another world from traditional Tibetan dance and body language, the state style of performing arts (which originated out of a serious 'Socialist realist' ethic), or even the more coy, girlish sensuality of the majority of Chinese female pop singers.

The 'real thing', however, has in the last few years been available in Tibet in the form of troupes of Nepali dancers. A Nepali band was first invited to perform in a Lhasa nightclub, 'New Century', in 2004. They only sang Hindi film songs, however, though performed some Nepali dance. They were a great success. The next group, and the first Bollywood dance group, were two boys and two girls who were hired for a year to perform at 'Sunlight' nightclub in Lhasa from January 2006–07. After that, another group was hired to perform at the nightclub 'Golden sunshine', and yet another group in a grand hotel. The boss of 'Happy Place', a new, very smart Tibetan restaurant with a stage for singing and dancing in Xining, knew the boss of Sunlight nightclub in Lhasa, had seen the Nepali dancers perform Bollywood there and arranged for a troupe to come to work at Happy Place. These troupes were professional, and had some highly talented artistes. They had generally worked in the casinos and also performed in live shows in Nepal, with some of the female performers emphasising that they did not work in the bars (which are seedy, involving 'shower' dances, where the dancer performs drenched under a shower on stage in clinging, skimpy clothes, and in some places 'sexy' dances, and previously, naked dancing). Several had worked abroad, including Dubai, Korea, and Malaysia, and were looking to go abroad again, with Singapore also a possibility and the UK a higher ambition. This career is, in Nepali terms, very well paid.[34] The dancers in Lhasa were earning 3000–3300 Yuan per month, and those in Xining 3500 for the troupe leader, and 2500 for the others. This is better than working in the casino in Nepal, though not as well paid as performing in Malaysia and Singapore or Dubai, the latter of which can give a salary over double that. However, it is a salary far higher than the Tibetan dancers in nightclubs, on a par with the best singers, reflecting the rare, exotic appeal of the act. Indeed, the acts were immensely popular in Xining and Lhasa, especially in Xining, where the audience in the restaurant consisted of wealthy Chinese as well as wealthy Tibetans. Chinese guests in particular were bowled over by the Bollywood dance, with many enthusiastically filming the acts on mobile phones and video cameras.

This development in Tibet has linked Tibet into what are global networks of Bollywood dancers from Nepal. There are also Indian dancers working these networks. However, it is effectively impossible to get visas

34. At this time, one Chinese Yuan was approximately 8 Nepali Rupees, and 5 Indian Rupees' to give readers, who are more likely to be South Asia people, a sense of scale.

for Indians to work in Tibet (interview Jo Tsewang, one of the bosses of Thangula, 8 June 2005), especially, I assume, in a cultural, performative role. The Nepali dancers in one nightclub in Tibet said that they did not in fact have a work permit, but since the agent who arranged for them to come has good connections with the police and is well established in the tourist world of Lhasa, this was no problem.[35] This illustrates how the phenomenon of Nepalis performing Bollywood in Tibet has emerged out of the Nepal-Tibet trade and tourism links. The Nepali dancers form part of a wider Nepali community in tourist-trail Tibet working typically as chefs (in the case of men), and beauticians (in the case of girls). Special permits allowing Nepalese to work in Dram, the town on the Tibetan side of the Nepalese border, have also enabled Nepalese dancers to perform in this particular town, though I suspect that strictly speaking, these permits do not allow such cultural work. As the town through which the vast majority of traders and tourist guides pass (in order to drop off and pick up groups at the border), Dram has a very thriving nightlife (including many brothels), and constitutes one of the more important places for Tibetan nightclubs and Tibetan singers and dancers, some from as far as Amdo. Hence again, Nepal can be seen as acting as the mediator of the Tibetan, Chinese and South Asian worlds.

Bollywood is far from standard in Tibetan nightclubs, but is certainly a part of the broad menu, and more common than English language songs, and it appears to be getting more common, although it was only rarely played for disco or audience dancing when I visited on several trips between 2004–2007. There are many girls (though less boys) who love Bollywood dance, as I discuss below, and Bollywood dance could well become more common, especially since the emergence of 'authentic' performance by the visiting troupes from Nepal.

Tibetan nightclubs are the main public performance context for Bollywood. However, I saw the Bollywood/Bhangra song 'Number one Punjabi' from the film *Chori chori chupke chupke* (2001) performed at a one-day festival in Darstedo (Kandze Prefecture, Sichuan Province) in May 2005. I also talked to the leaders of two amateur dance groups who perform a modern version of participative Tibetan circle dance in town squares as collective exercise, who said that select groups of the circle-dancers had in the past learned Indian songs.[36] One group was from the outskirts of Chengdu and consisted overwhelmingly of Chinese people with a Tibetan leader, and the other was from Dartsedo, with four group leaders, one Tibetan, and slightly more than half of the participants Chinese. The group from Chengdu said they had one member (a Chinese woman) who was a big fan of Indian dance (she did not specify Bollywood or other) who used to teach them, and the Tibetan group leader from Darstedo said that there was a women from Kandze county town who was a dance teacher, trained at Chengdu University, who taught them (interviews with Pema Lhamo, Chengdu, 8 June 2005, and Yang Gueha, Dartsedo, 16 May 2005). Two university students I spoke to said that they, or other girls, had performed Indian dances at school, one saying that they had been taught by their dance teacher who was trained in one of the state academies and had not been to India. It is not clear if any of these dancers or dance

35. It is easy for Nepalis to come to Tibet since the relations between China and Nepal are friendly.

36. See Morcom (2007: 27–33) for an account of the new participative version of traditional Tibetan circle dance, *kordro*.

teachers had actually learned any form of Indian dance from the institutes where they trained, or whether they picked it up from VCDs, and/or possibly built on moves from Xinjiang or Kazakh dance (which overlap to some extent with Bollywood and are taught at certain Chinese academies, since they are minority nationalities of the PRC).

Karaoke is another source of Bollywood songs, although I do not know how standard a part of karaoke machine repertoire it is. I saw it in two places in Lhasa.

The market for Bollywood in Tibet and South Asian style

As seen already, one clear basis for Bollywood in Tibet is the link created by the Tibetan exiles in India and Nepal, and the fact that since the 1980s, there has been actual traffic of Tibetans back into Tibet. This link of the market for Bollywood with exile Tibet is even clearer when the distribution of Bollywood in Tibet is examined, where, on the basis of an albeit preliminary study, there is a definite correlation between Bollywood presence and level of interaction with exile Tibet. Bollywood hotspots include Lhasa, Labrang (Gannan prefecture, Gansu), Ngaba county (Ngaba prefecture, Sichuan), Machu (Gannan prefecture, Gansu), Lithang (Kandze prefecture, Sichuan) and Kandze County (Kandze Prefecture, Sichuan). In all these places, in a visit of a few days, I heard Bollywood playing on the street, or in nightclubs and discos, and/or was told by others that it was commonplace there. I visited other towns nearby these places, such as Darstedo and Daochen in Southern Kandze prefecture, or Sershul in northern Kandze Prefecture, where there was not this Bollywood presence (although Bollywood was available in music and/or video shops). Similarly, the prefecture town and Jonyi or Luchu counties in Gannan prefecture do not have the Bollywood presence of nearby Labrang and Machu. Likewise Nagchu, a major city and a prefecture capital only four hours away from Lhasa since the new road was built, which has very low contact with India or Nepal via refugees or tourism or trade, does not have the levels of Bollywood Lhasa does.

It is worth noting that Lhasa, Labrang, Ngaba, Kandze, Lithang and Machu are the places where some of the most powerful and/or persistent Tibetan protests against Chinese rule took place in the spring of 2008, though there were protests in many other places as well.[37] However, Bollywood in Tibet does not just map directly onto levels of interaction with exile or political agitation. It is also linked with international tourism and trade, which connects with South Asia, including exile Tibetans. Lhasa and Labrang are also key sites of tourism (Lhasa being directly connected by road and air to Kathmandu) and furthermore have a high level of trade with Nepal. Ngaba, while not particularly touristy, is home to some of the most successful businessmen of Tibet, many of whom are involved in trade with Nepal. Lithang is a touristy place, with the annual horserace an attraction, but not on the level of Lhasa or Labrang, and it is not particularly significant for international trade. Machu and also Kandze county are not particularly notable for tourism or international trade, though the latter is important in terms of monastic centres and business within Tibet. Bollywood in these places is probably more related to links with exile Tibet.[38]

The tourist industry, as it spreads in Tibet, can be seen to be creating more diffuse links with South Asia and also exile Tibet, which can act in

37. It is important to note that contact with India per se is not a cause of political agitation, and in fact may be just as much an effect. In particular, Lhasa, Labrang, Kandze County, and Lithang are important centres of power of old Tibet, and hence inevitably have seen strong resistance to Chinese rule and/or a large number of Tibetans who have relatives in India/Nepal or who have returned from there. What was particularly notable about the protests in 2008 was that they spread not only beyond Lhasa, which was where protests had mainly taken place in the past, but beyond places known for political agitation.

38. One of the most important tourist hotspots in Tibet is the now newly renamed Shangrila, which I did not have the opportunity to visit. See Kolas (2008) for a monograph on tourism in Shangrila. There is no specific mention of Bollywood.

the manner of preconditions for Bollywood. I noticed that in many touristy places such as Lhasa, Labrang, Shigatse, Dram[39] and the largely Tibetan 'ethnic' area of Chengdu and also Xining, tourist shops with 'ethnic' goods existed that included not just Tibetan merchandise but also goods from Kathmandu – for example the kinds of clothes and artefacts found selling in Kathmandu's tourist district, Thamel. Kolas reports that in Shangrila, the newly created Tibetan tourist centre in Yunnan province, paper lanterns and other goods imported from Nepal are on sale in tourist shops (Kolas 2008: 100). In these kinds of places, there are often also restaurants selling Indian/Nepali food (made by Nepali chefs) and Bollywood music is not unusual.[40] Figure 4 (a and b) shows photographs of shops in the Tibetan part of Chengdu, with Nepali paper lanterns, clothes, and Bollywood posters. In the case of Lhasa, Shigatse and Dram, the link with Nepal and exile Tibetans is direct, with a road connecting these places. However, Xining, Chengdu and Shangrila are far away from this route, linked through the tourist industry rather than geography. In the last few years, Daochen, a small country town in Kandze prefecture near Lithang (which is being marketed for large scale tourism due to its proximity to Yading) had an entire street rebuilt with Tibetan style buildings, with shops containing this Nepali merchandise as well as Tibetan artefacts. Daochen is on a tourist trail that links Chengdu, Kandze prefecture and Yunnan. What

39. Shigatse is a tourist attraction in its own right, and is also on the Lhasa-Kathmandu road, the last stop of which is Dram, through which the vast majority of tourists who exit Tibet by road, pass. There is limited tourist traffic that crosses the Tibet-Nepal border at other points.

40. I have heard Bollywood in restaurants myself in Lhasa, Shigatse, Dram, Labrang, and Chengdu.

Figure 4a: Nepali paper lanterns in tourist shop in Chengdu.

Figure 4b: Window with Bollywood posters and Nepali clothes stocked inside in tourist shop in Chengdu.

is interesting is that in these places South Asian style and sounds are being marketed more and more widely (as more of Tibet is set up for tourism) as Tibetan, or are placed in a Tibetan context, in this sense drawing Tibet into South Asia rather than into China. These places gain not just a South Asian look, but also a look of exile Tibet, which is characterized by mixtures of Tibetan and Nepali, or Indian Himalayan, handicrafts and clothes.

Trade and tourism with or via Nepal can also be seen to be leading to a South Asian or Himalayan presence and image in core contexts of Tibetan popular culture. In Chengdu, one of the first places Nepali merchandise and clothes were found was in Thangula nightclub and Thangula's shops, which arose because the wealthy Gyarong and Amdo (Sichuan) businessmen who own Thangula were associated with networks of other Amdo and Gyarong businessmen who were involved in trade with Nepal.[41] Another cultural establishment which shares this kind of style is the restaurant with musical entertainment 'Makye Ame', which has now two branches in Beijing, and branches in Lhasa and also Kunming (though music is not performed in the Lhasa branch). However, it is via Thangula in particular – arguably the most important of the Tibetan nightclubs in terms of prestigious performers, music production and trends – that Nepali/exile-Tibetan merchandise and Bollywood can be seen to have been established as fashions.

41. Gyarong is the easternmost region of the Tibetan indigenous areas. I met the younger brother of one of the Gyarong owners in 2007 while travelling into Kathmandu from the Tibetan border.

Thangula's Bollywood can also be seen to be tapping into another important mechanism underpinning Bollywood presence in not just Tibet but China too, that of the multiculturalism of China's multi-ethnic society. The Chinese state has trained its citizens through years of nationalist propaganda to (superficially and often paternalistically) appreciate the characteristic cultures of the different nationalities, and Bollywood easily fits into this scheme as 'the music of another nationality'. There is a significant Chinese market for Bollywood (as illustrated by the fact of the Guangdong-made Bollywood VCDs which are not aimed specifically at the Tibetan market). In terms of music and video shops in the places in Eastern Tibet I visited which were not the Bollywood 'hotspots', there was as much Bollywood in specifically Tibetan shops as there was in Chinese shops. The Chinese manager of a Tibetan music company in Chengdu said, when I asked about Kelsang Metok's Hindi songs, for example, that she thought it was good that she was doing Hindi numbers, that it was good variety to do the music of 'another nationality', and suggested I should try to do songs of 'another nationality' in the future, English or Hindi (after a first album with a friend that consisted entirely of Amdo songs, aimed only at the Amdo market) (Interview, Golden Eagle music company, Chengdu, 10 August 2006). Thangula is predominantly a Tibetan nightclub, but also had a Yi performer there, a Mongolian performer, some Bollywood (songs and dance, seen in Figure 5) and English language pop, and together with

Figure 5: Bollywood dance performance at Thangula.

its ethnic Nepali artefacts it fits well into the trope of exotic multiculturalism. In this sense, the lure of Bollywood in China and Tibet can be seen as having a firm basis in Chinese nationalism, in addition to, or instead of, links with exile Tibet, tourism and trade. The circle dance groups of Chengdu and Dartsedo saw Indian dance in this context of multiculturalism, and had no links with exiles. Indeed, the leader of the circle dance group in Chengdu was a stalwart Party member, and framed much of her account in Party propaganda-like discourse, for example, reporting that Falun Gong had been spreading in the square before, but now the square was occupied by circle dancing it had been stopped (Pema Lhamo, interview, Chengdu, 8 June 2005). In the context of multiculturalism and 'other' cultures, the appeal of India can lead into some clichéd 'orientalist' exotica. For example, a commercially released VCD I found in a large music store in Chengdu consisted of a tutorial on Indian dance, where three Chinese women sat cross-legged on the floor, veiled 'Arabian Nights style' in spangly Indian clothes, in a room with draped cloth, and performed what looked like beginner Bharatnatyam moves, not quite accurately, to twangy music.[42] Various tutorial VCDs of Indian dance, as well as those for dances of other nationalities, are common in mainstream Chinese music shops.

In addition to an exotic or more cheerful multicultural appeal, the lure of Bollywood is also grounded in its newness and its rarity in Tibet and China, which is highly significant in the competitive, commercial world that Thangula and other nightclubs are operating in. This makes Bollywood something that can be capitalized on as ethnicity and ethnic culture is being commercially (as well as politically) capitalized on across China for tourism.[43] When I was in Lhasa in 2007, I was surprised to see a 'Nagchu' dance with very novel moves, including Bollywood type ones, in Sunlight nightclub. When I inquired about it, the choreographer told me that they had created it after being told to do 'something new' by the management. I also saw a two-person 'girl band' performing in Xining in 2007 with Bollywood type moves. It is significant that these changes were occurring at a time when competition between Tibetan nightclubs had grown, with those in Lhasa in particular struggling, having lost their prior status as 'the places to be' (Morcom 2008: 275–277).

What is interesting is the way that Bollywood and South Asian presence is associated particularly with Tibet. The tourism and trade links via Nepal have given rise to South Asian artefacts across Tibet, so more and more Chinese return from trips to Tibet with Nepali clothing.[44] The Bollywood music in restaurants and/or nightclubs, including the Nepali dancers in Tibetan nightclubs and restaurants, also mean that many Chinese tourists as well as businessmen (who frequent nightclubs and in particular the smart restaurants such as 'Happy Place') will have Bollywood sounds and actual Bollywood shows associated with their trips to Tibet. This is in addition to the links with India and Bollywood formed from returned exile Tibetans or those closely associated with them and/or exile Tibet. In other words, Bollywood dance in Tibetan restaurants can be seen potentially as appealing to Chinese customers not just as the exotic music of the 'Indian nationality', but as something that is a part of the *Tibetan* nationality. This association of Tibet with India or South Asia is

42. I no longer have this VCD unfortunately, and cannot offer any more information on it.

43. Kolas' monograph on Shangrila addresses these issues in the context of one of the most blatant uses of ethnicity and exoticism for profit (2008).

44. A trader in Lhasa reported in 2006 that Chinese tourists were buying increasing quantities of Nepali clothes, which were cheap (due to the relative poverty of Nepal as compared to China) and good quality cotton. I am grateful to Tina Harris for sharing this piece of information from one of her interviews.

Figure 6: Cover of Hui Muslim-produced Tibetan exile music VCD from Lhasa.

further attested to by the fact that Chinese Muslim pirates sell Tibetan exile songs in Lhasa with video footage from Hindi films, and with Hindi film images on the covers, marketing them as more Indian than Tibetan, as seen in Figure 6.[45] Similarly, a poster I saw in Lanzhou featured a couple in Indian clothes, but with Tibetan writing (Figure 7, a and b). Many Tibetans certainly imagine themselves, to a greater or lesser degree, as linked with South Asia due to religion, and some expressed this directly in terms of their liking for Bollywood when I asked what appealed to them about Bollywood. More tangibly, many Tibetans are linked with India due to the fact of the Dalai Lama's presence in exile in India and/or friends and family there, or through having spent years of their life there, or through working in trade and tourism. However, the conceptual linking of Tibet with South Asia is apparently being put into the minds of Chinese people too, or being consolidated there.[46] Bollywood is also confused with music from Xinjiang; for example, Tibetans in Lhasa thought that a three-girl pop group from Xinjiang which had a hit song that swept the whole of China in 2006 were Bollywood performers (Tina Harris, personal communication, June 2008). However, in both ways, Bollywood merges, and is increasingly merging through tourism and trade links, as well as its place in Tibetan nightclubs and restaurants, with the image of the exotic fringes of China, Tibet and also Xinjiang.

45. It is necessary to add video footage since most exile music is CD rather than VCD format, but the choice to add Hindi film footage rather than say footage from Tibet is significant.

46. This association may well have been there before, due to Tibet's proximity to India and Nepal and the links of religion and trade discussed above. It is impossible to comment on this.

Figure 7a: Poster in Lanzhou combining Indian clothes with Tibetan writing.

Bollywood and things Indian, or the ethnic style that has emanated from Tibet, Nepal, and exile Tibetans in Nepal, is a growing fashion amongst Chinese and western tourists as well as local Tibetans. In addition to the Nepali clothes and artefacts, Bollywood posters can be seen prolifically, particularly in the Tibetan areas of places like Lhasa and Chengdu. Indian clothing and jewellery such as bindis, dangly earrings and sometimes salwar qameezes are also not uncommon, with the little girl in Figure 8 photographed at a rural festival about two hours by road from Lhasa'. I also met a group of college-aged girls who were serious Bollywood fans (one sporting a nose ring and Indian shirt sent by her Aunt in India), who idolize heroines, swoon over Shahrukh Khan (even if they were not quite sure of his name), and practise dance moves from

Figure 7b: Detail showing Tibetan writing, which translates as "The edge of the great plains blends into the sky".

Figure 8: Little girl wearing salwar qameez at Damshung horse race festival.

VCDs. One girl said that they used to watch Bollywood films at school on Saturday evenings, where a television was placed outside on the playground for them. This particular example illustrates that Bollywood and Indian culture, although associated to a large degree with exile culture, is not illicit, but trendy and multicultural and not, per se, a political issue. Bollywood in China also links in with the wider Chinese diaspora in Hong Kong and especially Singapore, where there are Indian populations and Bollywood dance has made its mark.[47]

Another important angle of the allure of Bollywood is its erotic appeal. This is partly linked with the construction of Bollywood and India as 'other', but is also due to the fact that Bollywood does quite consciously present its heroines and now also heroes in a highly erotic manner, and focuses on romantic love, with a wide range of blatant and also indirect ways of evoking the erotic. Indeed, several Tibetan girls I talked to who had satellite television with access to Bollywood in their villages said that they would not watch Bollywood with their brothers or parents, and would mostly only watch it with other girls, though viewing in mixed

47. In a trip to Singapore in December 2008, I found Indian dance bars with dancers from Bombay, and also Bollywood dance classes and shows involving not just the local Indian population, but other residents of Singapore, including Chinese, Japanese, Malay and westerners.

Figure 9: Sexy Bollywood: Pirate VCD from Guangdong front and back.

groups in Lhasa does not seem to be a problem. The association of Bollywood with romantic love and sex is to be seen clearly on the covers of many of the Guangdong produced pirate Bollywood VCDs, where there are not just scantily clad and seductively postured film heroines, but often western women too. These western women are not a part of the Bollywood song videos, and are apparently featured on the cover solely to increase the erotic appeal of the album. The title of the image featured in Figure 9 also speaks for itself regarding the association of India/Bollywood with the erotic/romantic. I also saw two Indian erotic films for hire in a video parlour in Lithang, one entitled Kama Sutra. Ironically, while India views the West as licentious, it appears that Tibet and China view India as, if not licentious, then certainly romantic, sensual and sexy. In comparison to Hollywood films where sex and kissing are explicit, Bollywood films are apparently innocent enough to have found a following in conservative, many of them Muslim, cultures across the world. In China and Tibet, however, Bollywood has the allure of an erotic 'other'.[48] In comparison to Tibetan and also Chinese pop videos, Bollywood can easily win in terms of eroticism created through body language, dance moves, expressions, revealing clothing, camera work, all underpinned by an aesthetic sense of the erotic in performance and art honed over millennia. This is a marked difference from Tibetan culture, where the erotic is not traditionally stylistically expressed in this way (though since around 2000, 'pop babe' type performers borrowing from western singers such as Britney Spears and Jennifer Lopez perform in an eroticized way).

48. I am grateful to the first reviewer of this article for this point.

Conclusions

Bollywood's existence in Tibet is the result of processes that can be described as 'globalization'. The increase in movement of people with regards to tourism is very much a feature of the 'interactions of a new order and intensity' of global modernity (Appadurai 1996: 27), as is the increase of trade and movement of products across borders. The pirate production of Bollywood, along with Hollywood movies and English language and other pop music in Guangdong, is also part of the illicit flows of global network capitalism that are omnipresent in the contemporary world (Louw 2001: 60–68; van Schendel and Abraham 2005; Wang 2003).

However, while such global processes form a broad backdrop, Bollywood in Tibet is specifically associated more with regional, national and local relations and issues. The role of nationalism is also crucial to the story, with the splitting of Tibet into China's Tibet and Exile Tibet an undesired but direct result of the nationalist project of the PRC, the 'collateral damage' of the construction of the PRC, which Chinese nationalism has never managed to heal. Also rooted in nationalism, that of multi-ethnic China, is the appropriation of Bollywood as the culture of another 'nationality', another exotic 'other' culture to be consumed in China. Bollywood in Tibet is indeed about globalization and contemporary pan-global processes and phenomena. However, it is also another chapter in the history of the relations of Tibet and South Asia.

Moving from the spatial to the temporal context, the phenomenon of Bollywood in Tibet also shows how such contemporary transcultural

movement is a factor not just of modernity. That Bollywood has found an audience in Tibet (even though there is virtually zero crossover in terms of musical culture and language and effectively no Indian population there) involves a host of links from the ancient to the pre- or early-modern; from the sense of affinity with 'Indian culture' due to Tibetan Buddhism's origin in India, to the diplomatic and trade ties of the first half of the twentieth century (which grew out of the older religious and trade ties) that led to the choice of India for exile by both the 13th and 14th Dalai Lamas.[49] In other words, Bollywood's presence may be a sign of modernity in Tibet and China, but it is also a sign of features of the pre-modern and ancient past too.

Bollywood's transnational journey to Tibet and China is hence temporally and spatially grounded in specific regional and historical relationships, 'distinctive geographies' or 'particular spatial attributes' (Held and McGrew 2000: 6) as opposed to homogenous global processes. Global Bollywood itself can be seen as forming an immensely complex spatio-temporal topography, transnational but not post-national, being very much shaped by nation states, nationalism, their histories and their contemporary relationships. Its interlocking continues to connect Tibetan popular music culture to Mumbai and many other places too, in ways which are known and unknown, visible, invisible, semi-visible and so on, but not homogenous.

Global Bollywood is in these ways consonant with models of contemporary culture as characterized by flows, as something not fixed to and correlated with place and people (Appadurai 1996; Ramnarine 2004). However, the fact that these modern flows are largely rooted in the relationships of the pre-modern or ancient history of that region show that such elasticity of cultural zones is a feature of the past, as well as the present. Indeed, the study of such a 'global' cultural phenomenon as Bollywood in Tibet may lead not just to an awareness of the networks of contemporary culture but also to those of the past. As has been pointed out, globalization is not singularly modern. For example, Stokes states, 'music has always travelled along the grain of political and economic power, establishing lasting dialogues between communities so linked. These dialogues have persisted, in the case of the movement of music between Africa and the New World, for example, for centuries' (Stokes 2003: 307). However, the language of 'flows', for example, tends to be reserved for the contemporary 'global' era, and terms such as 'deterritorialisation' imply a movement from fixity to flux that is in fact only relative, and perhaps not as pronounced as it seems.[50] While there is a change in the 'order and intensity' of connections in the contemporary world, it is also the case that many more of the 'routes' (Clifford 1997) or the movement along different 'grains' are clear, since we are dealing with the present. In particular, the past as process is especially difficult to see in the case of performing arts, and is actively obscured by folklorisation serving various cultural identity politics.[51]

Processes of change are underway that are mapping the world and culture in new ways, blurring many existing boundaries and making new connections or transforming old ones with some very surprising results. While Bollywood in Tibet may be anomalous to many, even more extraordinary-seeming was, for example, the discovery at the height of

49. The 13th Dalai Lama was in exile in India 1910–1913 (Goldstein 1989: 47–58).

50. van Schendel argues that the language and image of flows can give the impression of movement from one fixed base to another, often nation states, as represented by arrows on maps (2005: 41–47).

51. I discuss these issues in the context of Tibetan performing arts in an article on the remapping of Tibetan musical culture under Tibetan exile and Chinese nationalism (forthcoming).

the Tibetan protests in 2008 that Tibetan national flags were being manufactured in Guangdong (BBC 28 April 2008). However, in the larger scheme of culture that looks back further than the 'primordialism' of the nation state (Appadurai 1996: 21) and cultural traditions and identities 'invented' by ethnic and cultural nationalism (Hobsbawm 1992), this is more 'reterritorialisation' (van Schendel 2005: 39–40) than 'deterritorialisation' (Appadurai 1996), with the fixity of the cultural mappings of the nation state the exception rather than the rule, and, to a greater or lesser extent, a myth.

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Caricaturizing Freedom: Islam, Offence, and The Danish Cartoon Controversy

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Abstract

I argue in this paper that the publication of cartoons caricaturing Islam by Jyllands- Posten is problematic for a number of reasons. First, within liberal political theory itself, there are reasonable arguments that the depictions (at least two) perpetuate prejudice and verge on hate speech. Second, such depictions weaken the social conditions that make possible a thriving democracy (i.e., participation) by marginalizing the already marginalized. Moreover, the caricatures perpetuate an Orientalist discourse about the nature of Islam and the non-West, and hinder global intercultural dialogue and understanding between nations.

Keywords

Islam
Danish cartoon controversy
freedom of speech
intercultural dialogue

Introduction

The Danish Cartoon controversy confirms that we live in a much smaller world, a more transparent world, where political sovereignty can no longer bear the weight of neo-colonial discourse. What we say and do matters far past the limits of territorial integrity and has global consequences; we are accountable, beyond borders. Intercultural dialogue at the global level, and the social conditions from which it emerges, are fundamental to our interconnected existence. Such conditions are grounded in norms of mutual civility, respect, recognition, and, of course, freedom of speech. In this paper, I argue that, ironically, the cartoons erode the foundations that make possible global intercultural dialogue in the very guise of freedom.

Let me begin by pointing out that the manner in which the controversy has been framed in the media, that of reconciling the global conflict between the 'western' idea of freedom of speech with non-western nations, is problematic. It is grounded in a number of false oppositions that find support in an Orientalist discourse perpetuated by theorists such as Samuel Huntington (1996). As Tariq Ali argues, such false oppositions serve to further exploit formerly colonized nations in a number of arenas (2003). The idea of freedom of expression or speech – conceived of as an avenue for civil and respectful communication, discussion, debate, and criticism is not simply a western ideal. On cursory reflection alone, it is not at all clear to me that such an idea is only historically linked to and developed in Europe. Discussion and dialogue form the basis of many non-western cultures around the globe; the Aboriginal peoples of North America and their traditional form of participatory democracy is a good case in point. However that maybe, even if one believes the ideal of freedom of speech can somehow be linked only to Europe, this is certainly no

longer the case. It is certainly misleading to suggest that, here and now, freedom of speech, as an avenue for respectful criticism, is a value only esteemed by western nations. The world we live in is one of borrowing and hybrid mixture, where values, traditions, music, and art fuse in an intercultural mélange producing things of awesome beauty, alongside things we may abhor (such as rampant consumerism).

My aim here will be to provide an argument from within the theoretical and philosophical boundaries of secular liberal democratic principles that problematize the publication of the cartoons. After the demise of the Soviet Union, on a global level, liberal democracy is seen to be the key contender in terms of what it means to organize a society in just terms. Apart from Europe and the West, various non-European countries see this form of polity as a viable and live political option. Thus, I want to show that even within the confines of secular liberalism and democracy, this issue is problematic. As importantly, my objections aim to provide an internal critique because most of those who support the publication of the cartoons do so explicitly on the liberal theoretical basis of 'freedom of speech,' and free democratic exchange. I contend that one cannot consistently hold this position without serious conceptual difficulty. What of non-liberal justifications then? These are numerous and many will be compatible with the position I present here. To be sure, my arguments pertaining to the social conditions required for a democracy (i.e., its transcendental conditions) are foundational to and neutral among both liberal and socialist, or Marxist, democracies. In fact, my arguments have a much wider global scope. I argue that the crucial conditions required for democracy are the same as those required for intercultural dialogue across the globe more generally. Indeed, such conditions are critical to dialogue with non-secular and non-democratic nations of the world.

Along these lines, I argue that the publication of the cartoons caricaturing Islam by *Jyllands-Posten* is problematic for two basic reasons. First, I contend that there are reasonable arguments that at least two of the depictions clearly perpetuate cultural prejudice and fall under hate speech. As such, I contend that within the parameters of liberal political philosophy itself, there are good arguments against the publication of such material. Second, I argue that the cartoons, and any such caricaturizations, serve only to weaken the social conditions that make possible a thriving democracy (i.e., participation) by marginalizing the already marginalized. Importantly, they weaken the preconditions and possibility of civil intercultural dialogue across the globe generally. Third, I respond to various prevalent objections against my position.

I. Limits to freedom of speech within liberalism

I start by exploring the nature of hate speech and whether the cartoons qualify as such. Before I do this, let me note that often theorists implicitly connect any criticism of *Jyllands-Posten* by minorities to an implicit endorsement of violence against the Danish publishers. Such a connection is fallacious, to say the least. I strongly oppose the use of violence against any person for the publication of controversial material, but that does not mean that I cannot or do not have the democratic right to object to such material.

Children's stories

The controversy began when the *Jyllands-Posten*, the largest paper in Denmark, decided to print twelve controversial editorial cartoons depicting Muhammad with a caption that read: 'Muhammads ansigt' (Muhammad's face) on 30th September 2005. The debate recently re-emerged as eleven other Danish papers chose to reprint the cartoons (February 2008). This is after Danish intelligence allegedly uncovered a plot to kill one of the cartoonists and arrested three men (one of whom was released, and two others deported without trial). The defence of the choice to print and reprint the cartoons has been surprisingly unified by a majority of Danish spokespersons. The defence is grounded on, as the Danish PM Anders Rasmussen contends, the liberal basis for freedom of speech: 'Freedom of speech is the most valuable right to liberty –we must defend it to the very last (Buch-Andersen 2006).'

Jyllands-Posten argues the publication of the cartoons was an attempt to contribute to the debate over Islam and self-censorship. The entire cartoon episode originated with the author of a children's book who was attempting to write a book on the life of Muhammad. He sought an illustrator to depict the story but was at a loss. Danes were purportedly too frightened of the consequences; illustrations of Muhammad are prohibited by Muslims. But, as Joseph Carens points out, this manner of telling the story has a powerful rhetorical appeal (Carens 2006: 36). It casts the origins of the debate as not only benign, but admirable. Here we have a Dane who chooses to engage in the project of intercultural dialogue and consciousness-raising by helping Danish children to learn about a socially, economically, and politically marginalized class. This is a noble and heart-warming task. His project is stopped dead in its tracks by an anti-liberal force, which grips Danish consciousness with fear and results in self-censorship.

On deeper reflection, I would argue that the author's project is far from benign. Let us think again. The author is well aware that a wide majority of Muslims object to religious iconography and, as such, illustrations of Muhammad are thought to be disrespectful. If this is the case, then why would anyone deliberately and knowingly present information about another religion in a manner that most of its adherents find explicitly offensive and disrespectful, and this too to little children (some of whom will undoubtedly be Muslim children)? This is by no means a considerate and respectful approach to try and understand and appreciate another's religion. As such, I submit that this is far from a benign or admirable attempt to understand another culture or religion; it is something altogether different. As a response to the difficulty of finding an illustrator, the largest newspaper in Denmark, decides to step in. They decide to publish cartoons depicting Muhammad so as to 'contribute' to the debate on self-censorship and the fear that grips Danish consciousness. This is where the story takes a more problematic turn. The cartoons are not simply illustrations, but rather depict Muhammad and Islam in a controversial light, to say the least.

Let me examine the nature of the cartoons that *Jyllands-Posten* decides to publish. There are twelve in total. Some seem unobjectionable and appear to aim at humour and irony. These include Muhammad standing

in the desert; and Muhammad with a picture of himself and a sign in his turban stating, 'PR Stunt.' There are others that are far more controversial. The two most controversial are: Muhammad is depicted as a suicide bomber, he is shown with a bomb in his turban and a lit fuse with the Islamic creed (*Shahadah*) written on the bomb; and, Muhammad explaining to a line of suicide bombers to stop because 'we have run out of virgins.' Others include a depiction of Muslim women and a caption that translates as 'Prophet! Daft and dumb keeping women under thumb'; Muhammad with a sword in his hand and two fully veiled women by his side; and Muhammad standing with two demonic looking horns growing out of his turban (as Satan is often characterized).

We should take note also that the publication of the cartoons comes after the *Jyllands-Posten* refused to publish cartoons that ridicule and caricaturize Jesus, on the basis that Christians might be offended (Madood 2006: 5). Flemming Rose, the editor, justifies the publication of the Muhammad cartoons as an exercise in free speech, nothing to do with an intention to offend or prejudge an already marginalized segment of the Danish population (Rose 2006).

But are these cartoons really that problematic? In what way are they problematic? I certainly understand that the borders of what is acceptable and what is offensive are often a contested and difficult issue for a society, especially in a multicultural environment. But I contend that two of the cartoons (if not more) cross clear enough boundaries and perpetuate a form of prejudice against Muslims, and arguably fall under hate speech. How so?

Let me first discuss the idea of hate speech. Hate speech is a specific form of activity that expresses, encourages, advocates, or promotes hatred towards a group of people or community. Hate includes, among other things, rejection, social alienation, contempt, and may include the desire to harm (physically or otherwise). Such harm may be either active (shouting slogans and burning crosses) or it may be more silent. It may simply rely on the attempt to create a social environment in which the particular target is socially marginalized from social, political, and economic spheres of a society (e.g., Black people in America are a good case in point). There are often two key elements to hate activity. First, a group is singled out on the basis of some primordial identity marker; these are some set of purportedly shared features (real or imagined), such as, but not limited to, race, religion, culture, skin-color, gender, sexual orientation, dress, attitudes, psychological traits, personality, intelligence and the like. These features of group identity may be visible (such as skin color, or gender, or dress) or sometimes may not (sexual orientation). Often, such characteristics are difficult to change without giving up something of critical value (religion, culture) and sometimes they are impossible to change (skin color, race). In fact, it serves victimizers well to pick characteristics that are not malleable. Second, the group is then branded as inferior, disgusting, dangerous, and inherently inferior on this basis of such singling-out features and markers. This branding, and consequent ostracization and social alienation, is often based upon prejudice and demeaning stereotypes.

Let me emphasize that hate speech is not simply speech, but rather an activity. Such activity can be promoted, and sometimes best promoted by

symbols (such as the Nazi Swastika). Furthermore, hate speech does not necessarily result in outward mayhem or social disorder (as in street fights or bombing). It can simply be aimed at producing a chilling climate of subtle discrimination, in which the targeted party can no longer live or raise their children comfortably. But this does not mean that the more silent activity is by any means less extreme or less problematic or inert. In fact, discrimination is often more deadly this way, as one can never put a finger or point out the prejudice.

The two cartoons I have mentioned previously satisfy the criterion for hate speech. Both cartoons pick out a certain religious group and connect that group, unfairly, with not only violence but terrorism. The representations speak louder than words. The images are symbolically powerful and carry a disturbing message: Islam is inherently a religion of violence and its follower's terrorists. By choosing Muhammad, the cartoons identify not simply another man (for example, if one were to pick Osama Bin Laden or a particular sect of religious extremists), Muhammad is the spiritual founder and forefather of Islam. He represents Islam in much the same way as Jesus represents Christianity and the Buddha represents Buddhism. By placing a lit bomb in his turban and depicting him as a suicide bomber, or by having him greet suicide bombers with an announcement that he has run out of virgins to give them (i.e., their 'just' reward) is not only to intimately connect him to terrorism, as somehow the master kingpin, but to stereotype his followers as terrorists also. It is to link the whole of the community that follows his rules and worships him as a part of their daily life (approximately one billion people) to terrorism. Importantly, this connection is not a matter of extrinsic or contingent fact (i.e., a matter of some extremists interpreting the Koran self-servingly), but intrinsic in nature. Muhammad himself is a terrorist, and thus, *ipso facto*, his teachings are grounded in violence and terror. His followers are but mere instruments of such terror.

All of this is done without argument, without giving us reasons to support such assertions. Of course, the very nature of caricatures is to offer no arguments, indeed, to cut through the arguments. Yet, I think it is no small matter to brand a whole religion, and peoples, as terrorists, without offering reasons to support such vast overgeneralizations. Nor is this an isolated incident; Muslims have been the target of prejudice and discrimination for some time now. The cartoons serve only to fuel this social climate by perpetuating disturbing prejudice and stereotypes. Such representations are part of a larger historical picture in which the Muslim world is marginalized and alienated as fundamentalist, backward, barbaric and needing to be civilized by the rationally-minded, progressive and freedom-loving West.

Now let me ask, what better reason can we have to hate others other than that they, and their whole way of life, is inherently devoted to violence? What better reason can we have to alienate others than the fact that they are, or support, suicide bombers committed to blowing up mothers and innocent babies at grocery stores and park-outings, all in the name of God. Such a group certainly deserves our hostility, our rejection, our outright hate – how could it not? Anyone who follows such a religion ought rightly to be shunned and alienated from participation in the public

sphere of a truly liberal and democratic order. In sum then: the cartoons spread prejudice by perpetuating humiliating, grossly untrue overgeneralizations and demeaning stereotypes that link the entire Muslim world with terrorism and violence. In other words, they spread hate.

Liberalism, freedom, and the harm principle

Perhaps, I am way off track here. Many object that the cartoons are only a jest, all in good humour. Muslims have to realize that political parody, satire, and humour is a part of the liberal-democratic tradition. I understand political parody, but I would argue that that too has boundaries. Let me ask: what if the caricatures had been about Moses, depicting him as a crooked businessman caught in the act of duping others out of their property? Or, consider cartoons aimed at caricaturizing homosexuals or women? Are these also all in good fun? Most would shout racism, discrimination and sexual harassment. Even humour has some limits. Other peoples' pain and suffering, their social alienation, is not something that should be laughed at, or is it? Many liberals argue that this is the price for living in the liberal democracy, the cost of freedom. Christians regularly have to tolerate and live with all sorts of abuse. Indeed, Rose argues that 'contemporary democracy and freedom of speech' requires that Muslims put up with 'insults, mockery, and ridicule,' for this is the price of a 'modern secular society.' Randall Hansen, a political scientist, similarly argues that:

> I am sure it is the case that many Muslims are deeply and genuinely offended by the Danish cartoons, and I sympathize them. But this offence is the price of living in a liberal society. … Elderly Jews, including holocaust survivors, have been told that they could not stop neo-Nazis from marching past their front windows. … they simply had to accept it. So it is with those Muslims who think that their religion is above satire and mockery.
>
> (Hansen 2006: 15–16)

Randall argues that either Muslim citizens and immigrants accept this supposed fact about liberal democracies or, basically, get out: 'they have to decide whether they wish to live in a liberal democratic society,' as free speech 'is a part of the liberal democratic framework, not a negotiable addition to it.' And although Randall himself claims to be against 'hate speech,' it is difficult to see what qualifies his position (given that it is entirely acceptable for me to stand outside an 80 year old holocaust victim's door waving a Swastika in his/her face).[1]

Let me now consider the key issue: should such speech indeed be protected by the state? Many liberals object to this on the grounds that limitations on freedom of speech interfere with individual autonomy, which is a prized value for liberal democratic societies. I contend that such arguments to defend freedom of speech suffer from a number of critical flaws. I point out that no freedoms are absolute. My right to freedom of conscience does not mean that I can offer you as a sacrifice; an individual's freedom is limited by other's freedom. I contend that while most liberals recognize that individual freedom is restricted by the harm principle, many fail to appreciate the depth of psychological and social harm that often results from speech that is degrading, prejudiced, racist, or homophobic.

1. In fact, it is difficult to make much sense of Randall's unprincipled arguments at all. While hate in general is not permissible for Randall (whatever would qualify as such in his view), it is entirely unproblematic to express hatred for religion. Why is this the case? Freedom of conscience, and the right to live according to one's comprehensive doctrines (whether such doctrines are religious or not) is foundational not only to liberalism, but basic human rights. This is not to mention that toleration is also a key value for liberalism.

How might I philosophically justify the claim that it is entirely unproblematic for me to mock, degrade, or say things that publically humiliate you on the basis of your ethnic, sexual, or religious affiliation – in fact, that this is my legal right to do so, and that you have an obligation, indeed a political duty to not only 'put up' with it, but respect my right as a matter of justice and fairness.

I think that, among others, one of the sources of this view is a particular interpretation of liberalism and how a liberal society is supposed to be constituted (an early John Rawls (1971) – Ronald Dworkin (1984) variant). Let me briefly conduct a conceptual genealogy and examine this brand of liberalism in which such a right may seem naturally to be found. Theorists who defend this view of liberalism argue that the only just society or acceptable form of social organization proceeds along particular liberal lines. Such a society is conceived of as contractarian in nature: people co-exist together on the basis of rational self-interest, which is maximal freedom to live whichever way they want. They often stand in competing and adversarial relations to one another since the prime and overriding value for such a model is individual freedom (my freedom to do what I want may conflict with your freedom to do what you want). If individual freedom is not to be simply empty or formal then it needs to be cashed out in terms of real life social conditions that must be met. The social conditions that make possible individual freedom are factors such as the right to own private property and basic civil and political rights, such as the right to vote, freedom of conscience and the right to free speech.

Liberals disagree among themselves about exactly what such conditions are and require, for example, whether they include a minimal level of subsistence and so on. However that may be, the state of this theoretical model has mainly a procedural role: its job is to arbitrate between citizens when their ends and actions conflict. The state is to remain entirely neutral with regard to views of the good life. The only justifiable limits to individual freedom are another's such freedoms, mostly conceived along John Stuart Mill's harm principle: I am free to do what I want as long as I do not harm others and interfere with their freedom (2008: 5–132). The job of the legal system is to enforce that I do not do so. The clear division between church and state, between law and morality, between the private and public are at the heart of such a society. The state should not be organized around any particular religion or tell me what religion I ought to follow (that is my private business). As well, the state should not be grounded in a particular moral vision of the good life. It is my private business and right to decide if I want to be an ethical egoist or a compassionate human being.

Now, as long as I do not interfere with your individual freedom or harm you (and this is usually interpreted quite narrowly), then I can do pretty much what I want. If I decide that I hate you/your children/your community because you are Jewish (or Black, Muslim, or Native, or a homosexual, and so on) and I would like to march in front of your door carrying banners with large Swastikas, then this is my legitimate and political right, as long as I do not enter your private property, break your windows, or physically harass you. It is a part of my right to freedom of speech.

Sticks and stones

I argue that the attempt to defend freedom of speech to this extent is problematic even within such a liberal model of society itself. One may begin by pointing out that no freedoms are absolute and even the staunchest libertarian will have to agree. My freedom and right to own private property does not mean that I am free to steal your stuff; my right to mobility does not mean that I can walk into your house uninvited; my freedom of conscience does not mean that I can use you as a sacrifice, and so on. That is, individual freedoms are weighted alongside other freedoms, no one, in principle, being of an absolute nature. Limits are defined in terms of interference in others' freedoms, or harms caused.

If, in principle, freedoms are limited by interference in other's freedoms conceived along the lines of the harm principle, then why should freedom of speech be excluded? Why should freedom of expression trump all other values? I would argue that one key reason is a 'sticks and stones' type of perspective where speech is thought to be somehow an inert activity, of little weight when compared to action. If I punch you in the face for no other reason than that you are Black, Muslim, or homosexual, then that is an action that clearly and unjustifiably violates your bodily integrity and harms you in a direct manner that interferes with your individual freedom. But if I want to publically spread prejudice and demeaning stereotypes that degrade you on the basis of some morally arbitrary characteristics, and if I want to mobilize my gang to march through your neighborhood carrying banners proclaiming, for example, 'Ni–ers, P-kis, F-gs or K-kes, or Jews/Muslims are dumb, inferior, or terrorists' or something of that nature, then I should be free to do so, and my freedom should be protected by the modern liberal state. I contend that this is unreasonable. The above argument fails to appreciate the depth of emotional, psychological, social, and political harm that often results when speech is degrading, racist, homophobic, or misogynist. Or put another way, speech is not simply an inert activity and can have even more devastating effects that physical abuse; speech is action.

Harm caused by speech

Such harm occurs at various levels. Targeting people and promoting hate creates a climate of conflict and social instability. In extreme cases, where speech is used not simply to mock a targeted group, but rather to positively spread prejudice, hate and hostility in a systematic manner, the long term effects can be devastating in a number of ways. Such intimidation often condemns members of targeted groups, and their children, to live lives of fear, isolation, and social alienation. This inhibits participation in the wider social and political life of the community that is fundamental to the spirit of democracy and dialogue. It can damage their sense of self-worth and dignity; something essential not only to political participation but to developing one's full life potential or individual autonomy, which is a key value for a liberal society.

As philosophers such as Will Kymlicka (1995) and Charles Taylor (1995) point out, there is an intimate connection between group identity and self-identity. For many people, cultural, religious, and ethnic identity is integral to their sense of self; it provides them with a sense of identity, who they are, what is of value and significance. If a group is

constantly and systematically demeaned and degraded in the public domain, then individual lives are made far worse. Indeed, as Taylor argues, if people are constantly exposed to negative and depreciatory images and stories about their groups, they may come to actually adopt such images. Individuals, especially children, often internalize the stories that wider society tells them about themselves. They may come to lead lives of self-hatred, self-doubt, and low-esteem. Some may come to live lives of social anxiety, always looking behind their shoulder, afraid to speak their minds, overly concerned about their gestures, accents, dress and physical appearance. This can be debilitating, for even when the formal obstacles to their equal participation fall away, group members may not be able to take advantage of such new found opportunities because of their lack of self-confidence.

Such people are unjustly disadvantaged and cannot fully access the benefits of freedom and equality offered by a liberal society. And, while it may be true that it is difficult to measure the harms caused, it is no doubt real and significant. There is a deep sense of social alienation that comes along with growing up in a prejudiced environment and a huge cost to individual lives (in this regard, see also Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, 2004, 1997; and Delgado 1982).

Of course, it is clear that limiting freedom of expression is a serious matter, and one that cannot be made without careful consideration, investigation, and public dialogue. But while it is certainly true that freedom of speech is an integral and paramount value for society, so is individual equality, dignity, and the freedom to live one's life free from unjustified intimidation and harassment on the basis of morally arbitrary characteristics, and to protect one's children from prejudiced hate mongers. In addition, freedom of conscience is also foundational to a liberal society. That is, the right to live according to one's comprehensive beliefs about the world and what gives value to life (be these beliefs religiously grounded or not) is basic and axiomatic. And toleration is of equal value. Therefore, I contend that freedom of speech needs to be balanced against, and cannot be allowed to trump, all other values at all times and places.

Libel, defamation, slander and crying fire

In fact, in many liberal democracies (including non-European ones) such a right does not trump all other such values. Many recognize the harm of hate speech and have legal provisions in response. For example, Britain limits abusive, insulting and threatening speech, Canada bans speech that is degrading, Australia bans that which humiliates or intimidates groups, and Germany bans speech that violates the dignity of or degrades a group. Various non-European countries also do the same, such as India and Israel. Many are guided by the International Covenant on Civil and Political rights, in particular article twenty that proscribes 'any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination' (Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights 1966).[2] Indeed, Denmark too has laws against hate speech.

But less than this, many countries have legal penalties for banning what one might perhaps consider lesser infringements, such as defamation or libel. If making untruthful and damaging remarks about an individual is legally prohibited, then why would something worse in

2. Yet, there are other western countries, most notably the United States, which resists banning hate speech. There is a sort of entrenched absolutism about freedom of speech to which a wide number of Americans subscribe. This becomes clear in the common, pop, and also the intellectual culture of the USA. Indeed, the ACLU went so far as to defend Neo-Nazi's demand that they be able to march carrying Swastikas in a predominantly Jewish part of Chicago (Skokie) that contained holocaust survivors.

many regards – such as spreading hate towards targeted minorities, highlighting their purported inherent inequalities, inferior and violent natures, and so on, be legally permissible? One might be tempted to bite the bullet here and argue that libel ought not to be legally and theoretically prohibited, and that one ought to allow people to slander and defame others publically at will. But what about yelling fire in a crowded theatre for one's simple amusement (knowing that there is no such fire)? Most agree that such (purposely untruthful) utterances ought to be prohibited and have a legal penalty attached to them. Why? The reason usually given is that it is a false statement that causes devastating and direct harm to people's lives. But, even if the harm caused by prejudiced speech is not as easy to see, it is nevertheless devastating and has just as far reaching harmful consequences.

II. Democracy and dialogue

In this part of my paper, I offer a transcendental argument for democracy. Indeed, the argument is for any form of a civilized global exchange and intercultural dialogue between nations. That is, I contend that caricatures such as the above weaken the social conditions that make possible a thriving democracy (i.e., participation) by marginalizing the already marginalized. They have further reach however. We do not live in isolated spheres, cut off from one another. What we say and do has impact much beyond our borders; this is clear from the response that the cartoons received from around the globe. In an interconnected world, the degree and weight of responsibility for what we say and do is that much greater. By marginalizing the already marginalized and perpetuating prejudiced stereotypes, the caricatures weaken the bonds of civility required for global international exchange and intercultural dialogue. They deteriorate the hope of mutual accommodation between various nations. Furthermore, I argue that the Danish cartoons are not somehow an isolated historical event; they perpetuate an Orientalist discourse about the nature of Islam and the 'non-West,' and hinder global intercultural dialogue and understanding between communities and nations.

Let me perhaps ask a basic and naïve question about the nature and goals of freedom of speech. And, let me ask whether such goals can be achieved without demeaning, degrading and spreading prejudice towards targeted groups. It might seem too obvious a question, but why do we think that freedom of speech is important? What does it allow us to do? John Stuart Mill famously points out that such a freedom allows us to critically examine and debate the merit of particular ideas; to scrutinize widely held and accepted dogmas. It is essential to the discovery of truth and falsity and to figure out what is of value, and what is not, in the market place of ideas. Politically, it allows to keep the powers that be accountable, to maintain an informed and educated citizenry: to hold open public debate and discussion, and is a fundamental requirement to the kind of participation that is critical in a democracy. It is indispensable to many aspects of our individual and collective lives as members of diverse communities, nations, and the globe at large.

But, can these goals be achieved without the need to mock, ridicule, stereotype, and publically humiliate and spread prejudice towards others?

Yes, they can. If I want to argue that a particular interpretation of the Koran is problematic or distorted, or that I disagree with specific beliefs and practices of a particular group or community for a number of reasons, does that require that I be able to publically lampoon and feed animosity via prejudiced caricaturizations of such beliefs, especially if such beliefs are deeply held and thought to be sacred? Moreover, should such actions be a legally protected by the state? This seems to me akin to having a right to bullying people because the target of such prejudice are usually members of minority groups that do not enjoy the kind of social freedom and self-confidence of the majority, and usually are the on-going historical targets of prejudice and discrimination. In fact, it seems to me the opposite, by allowing such speech we caricaturize the goals and ends of freedom of speech. They are in fact thwarted by such speech, if anything.

In terms of democracy, by legally making permissible harassment, vicious *ad hominan* attacks, social intimidation, and social alienation of large subsections of the population on the basis of their religion, gender or skin color, one does not encourage equal participation, one threatens its very existence. In fact, for these reasons, one might argue that hate speech thwarts the very social conditions that make possible the kind of society in which freedom of speech can flourish in the first place. Such a society requires standards of civility (and decency) that participants are held against in dialogue and discussion; it requires some form of social stability and a degree of harmony between various groups. But hate speech, by its nature, is aimed at destroying these conditions.

Indeed, a great number of objections against the caricatures of Islam and Muhammad were simply along those lines. A wide majority of Muslims around the globe did not and do not object to respectful criticisms of Islam; indeed, libraries are full of them. But what they object to are the harmful and prejudiced assumptions that the caricatures embodied. The point is not that people should not be free to express criticism towards particular religions and ideologies they find to be problematic, only that such criticisms should proceed in a civil manner with due consideration and respect, without biased stereotyping, name-calling, ad hominam attacks and other intimidation tactics. Indeed, I am bewildered at how placing a bomb in Mohammad's turban and depicting him as a suicide bomber is any form of civil objection to the manner in which Islam is appropriated by extremists; the same can be said for the cartoon about the Prophet exclaiming that 'we've run out of virgins.' Such cartoons are grounded in and work only to perpetuate prejudiced stereotypes that equate Islam and all Muslims with terrorism – which Muslims around the globe have been trying to dispel since 911. They create a social environment of conflict and intimidation for a community that already feels that its way of life is threatened. I do not see how such tactics incorporate people into the wider public and democratic sphere, as Rose argues. They have the opposite effect: the marginalized feel further marginalized and powerless.

As importantly, this kind of marginalization leads to social isolation and social alienation. These are perfect conditions for fundamentalists to recruit and indoctrinate those alienated with hate and propaganda; this is especially true in the case of young men. This begins a vicious cycle, as fundamentalists seek to further solidify the distance between "us and them."

Civility and respect are not just important in creating the social conditions for a functioning democracy, they are critical to international intercultural relationships in general. As Vaclav Havel argues, we need to breath the spirit of intercultural dialogue in our everyday lives. Dialogue is paramount in today's changing global and multicultural environment, where ethnic and religious tensions can often run high, and where basic understandings may not be shared. It is the only mechanism that can foster and promote understanding between communities, which makes the goals of mutual cooperation between peoples more likely, and stable. Critically, dialogue is of vital importance as it is a key means for ensuring that the relationship between peoples proceeds on the basis of equality. We can ill afford the colonial luxury to assume that our perspective is the standard to which all must comply. The ideal of dialogue requires an effort to understand and appreciate others' perspectives and self-understandings in the hope of mutual recognition. It requires adopting an open-minded attitude towards others' traditions, in the hope of building a relationship of mutual trust, accommodation, and cooperation between diverse cultural communities. This ideal is more demanding than simply tolerating or having to put up with and endure other ways of life. However, being open to others' self-understandings does not necessarily mean that one agree with, convert to, or develop a personal preference for the particular views or practices in question. But it does require giving these serious and due consideration and being at least open to an acknowledgement of their worth.

Speech that is meant to lampoon, insult and stereotype does nothing to support such goals, but only increases the likelihood of even more conflict and division. This is certainly true with the above caricatures, they only serve to increase the divide between Muslim and non-Muslim nations. None of this is to say that we can always circumvent giving others offence. But, the norms of civility and respect (the transcendental conditions of democracy and dialogue) require giving due and serious consideration to other's perspectives and if offense cannot be avoided, we need to explain why such offense is inevitable and necessary. The action of publically depicting Muhammad as a suicide bomber is neither inevitable or necessary. In fact, on the contrary, it is an act of gratuitous offense. There are other ways of expressing frustrations about the nature of religious (or non-religious) extremism without spreading prejudice and hateful attitudes ourselves.

Furthermore, let me emphasize that the manner in which the cartoons depict Muslims and Islam is not somehow an isolated event. It fits well into an established discourse that is deeply rooted in a historical power relationship between the West and non-West. This relationship is embedded in colonial and neo-colonial domination, exploitation, and oppression of weaker nations of the world. Such a discourse often relies on the realm of ideas as a means to exclude different peoples and ways of life from participation in important social, economic, and political arenas. The cartoons resonate with a variety of false oppositions that characterizes such a discourse; the non-West, especially Muslims, are, among other things, irrational, violent, uncivilized, misogynist, and hopelessly religious and anti-scientific. The West on the other hand, is freedom-loving, democratic, scientific, and the epitome

of rationality. The cartoons serve to reinforce this image of Muslims as backward, religious, women-hating, violent thugs.

III. Some prevalent objections

There are a number of objections against my position. Here I consider some which I think are among the most prevalent.

Liberal democracy: love it or leave it

As I mentioned, both Rose and Randall argue that offense is simply the way that liberal democracies work and Muslims either tolerate such an offense, or leave. After all, Christians have to put up with their most cherished beliefs being lampooned; and, so, Muslims have to learn to bear the same things. This is the equal right to be harassed and bullied argument. There are number of problems here (apart from the harms of hate speech argument I have already discussed).

First, the situation of Christians is not the same as that of Muslims. Christians are a part of the dominant majority in Europe and North America. Muslims are not. In fact, most Muslims in Europe are a part of the economically, socially, and politically marginalized weaker class. This is apart from the Islamaphobia they face since 911 and a wider history of intolerance and historical prejudice. Harassing someone who is strong and has most of society on his side is different from harassing someone who is weak and has little going for him. The latter is called bullying. Secondly, there is a more fundamental issue for which Rose and Randall do not account. They simply take it for granted that the right to offend Christians (and others) is somehow an inalienable right in a liberal democracy. They fail to provide sufficiently good reason for this apart from, 'well, this is the way we do things around here, so like it or leave.' Just because this is the way we do things here (supposedly) does not necessarily mean that they ought to be done that way. Randall offers no argument for why liberal democracies cannot, or more importantly, should not change in this regard. Perhaps Muslim citizens and immigrants are on to something and civil discourse is to be admired. In other words, exactly why should Christians put up with such humiliation? The reason that it is a part of our tradition to harass, lampoon, and bully religious people is not to offer a good justification.

Let me emphasize that both Rose and Randall fail to treat Muslims citizens as equals. As citizens of a liberal democracy, they are, as anyone, entitled to voice their perspectives and judgements in the political domain. They are entitled to try and convince people of their perspectives. This is integral to the process of democracy. To tell them to 'like it or leave' is to treat them as second-class citizens.

Artistic freedom

In a liberal democracy, artistic expression is basic and foundational. As such, it is and ought to be my artistic freedom to be able to express myself in whichever way I desire, even if this means using profanities and obscenities to characterize that which others consider sacred. In fact, it is not only in my interest, but in the interest of society to be able to enjoy the fruits of such artistic labor. Artistic expression is an essential component of

being human and a part of human nature. It is our highest achievement and defines what it is to be truly human. This is the line of argument often pursued by Salman Rushdie (see Parekh 1990).

I contend that this line of reasoning is problematic. I certainly acknowledge that art is an important and integral part of what it means to be human and I certainly believe that we ought to encourage such development in society. One can do this without at the same time acknowledging that artistic expression is of absolute value that overrides all other values in society, such as the freedom of others to live in an environment of peace in which they can raise their children without threat. As important is the value of freedom of conscience, which provides a safe space for others to practice their religions (or not) without interference. Now, I may find that I am only made fully human by writing a novel that satirizes, parodies, and pokes fun of the victims of the holocaust. But it is not at all clear to me why Jews, or society at large, need to tolerate any such work. I do not see why society needs to bear the burdens of the benefit and pleasure I derive from such a pursuit. My retort is along the same lines; while it is true that freedom of speech and artistic freedom are foundational, these too have limits. Such limits are defined by the freedom of other individuals to also pursue their goals without interference. Moreover, because something may be a part of human nature does not mean that we need to give it unrestrained license (e.g. aggression).

The slippery slope: From here to totalitarianism

But, the borders of the acceptable and the offensive are contested in a multicultural society, and often very difficult to define. This is where the second objection comes in. At first we begin with banning a few offensive words, then a few novels, and then, we end up in a totalitarian society. As Fleming Rose argues:

> …I am sensitive about calls for censorship on the grounds of insult. This is a popular trick of totalitarian movements: Label any critique or call for debate as an insult and punish the offenders. That is what happened to…Alexander Sozhenitsyn, Natan Sharansky…. The regime accused them of anti-Soviet propaganda, just as some Muslims are labeling twelve cartoons in a Danish newspaper as anti-Islamic.
>
> (Rose 2006: 19 February B01)

The objection is fallacious. It assumes that one set of events will logically, directly and automatically lead to another, without specifying exactly why this is the case. I fail to see how the claim that perpetuating prejudiced stereotypes that link Islam and all Muslims with terrorism is problematic to supporting a totalitarian state. There is no necessary empirical or logical correlation. First, let me take the empirical component. Most European countries as I noted, including Denmark itself, have laws against hate speech, and much lesser offences such as libel or defaming another. I do not see any empirical connection between these articles and Maoist support. Secondly, let me look at the purported conceptual connection. Such an assumption is theoretically unreasonable. We can argue for limits to

freedom of speech fully within the conceptual and theoretical limits of liberalism and democracy (as I have done).

What is true however is that limiting freedom of speech is a serious issue, one that cannot be easily decided without resource to extensive study, research, and public and intercultural dialogue. As I acknowledge, such limits are often contested and difficult to arrive at in a multicultural society. This is an issue that we, as a society, need to arrive at together through dialogue and discussion. Nothing here implicates supporting a totalitarian political regime which sanctions the arbitrary abuse of political power.

Conclusion

In a decolonizing world, it is not as easy to claim that one's favored interpretations of particular values set the standards to which all must adhere in order to have a voice at the table. The debates over the cartoons, if nothing else, attest to such resistance. The conditions that make possible democracy and intercultural dialogue in general, at the global level, are bound by norms of mutual civility, respect, recognition, and, freedom of speech. The cartoons published by the Danish paper erode the very foundations that make possible such global dialogue. They perpetuate prejudiced stereotypes against Islam and Muslims and fall under hate speech; they deteriorate the social fabric of respect and recognition required for mutual accommodation and cooperation in today's global multicultural environment.

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Book Reviews

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Bhangra: Birmingham and Beyond, Rajinder Dudrah, with contributions from Boy Chana and Ammo Talwar, (2007)

Birmingham City Council Library and Archive Service,
(81 pp.), ISBN 0-7093-0256-8, £16.99

Reviewed by Ananya Jahanara Kabir

In 1989, even as Technotronic released their world-wide house music hit, 'Pump up the Jam', the Birmingham-based Bhangra group Pardesi released their own dance anthem, 'Pump up the Bhangra'. An infectious combination of Western youth music beats and South Asian melodies, this album, and its title track, insisted on its identity as a British Punjabi sound, with the latter point being underscored through the very pronunciation of the word 'bhangra'. What, in historical, cultural and political terms, does it actually mean to declare, 'pump up the *bhangra*'? What is the significance of combining that particular verb form, 'to pump up', with neither 'jam', nor even 'music', but with the word 'bhangra', where 'bhangra' is enunciated not in a generic South Asian fashion, but in an accent and inflection instantly recognisable as *Punjabi*? And what does it mean that this production of an urban Punjabiness is achieved through a musical style with rural and folk roots, now relocated and thriving in the British Midlands? Is that music local, trans-local, trans-global? Do we classify it as world music, or it is better understood as music that signifies community, belonging and resistance in a very specific diasporic context – that of 1980s Britain? How do we plot its development through the changing politics, both domestic and international, of the 1990s and beyond?

These are the kind of questions raised by *Bhangra: Birmingham and Beyond*, written by sociologist of diasporic South Asian cultures, Rajinder Dudrah, with contributions from the Bhangra DJ Boy Chana and music promoter Ammo Talwar. While the book does not set out necessarily to answer them, or indeed, to pose explicitly such research questions, its success and impact lies in its ability to provoke their articulation in the reader. A timely, accessible and spirited work, it reflects the energy of the music it chronicles: the book bursts with life and irreverence, while claiming our attention and involvement in full. Produced in conjunction with the multimedia exhibition 'From Soho Road to the Punjab', for which Dudrah, Chana and Talwar worked together closely, *Bhangra: Birmingham and Beyond* comes as close as the written text can to capturing the affect and atmosphere of a musical genre and its associated cultural products. As a collaborative production, it solicits a range of audiences, blurring boundaries between academic and non-academic readers much in the manner of the dance floor. This is an important book that registers, in unexpected ways, the significance of a musical movement much talked about, but little

researched into. In this regard, its publication by the Birmingham City Council Library and Archive Service must be seen as a major step within the wider politics of multiculturalism in the UK, particularly in the context of Birmingham's demographic shift towards becoming Europe's first 'ethnic majority city' by 2020.

As a cultural phenomenon, British Bhangra has been around for at least three decades, and it now even boasts that mandatory sign of maturation – the recognition among aficionados of its epiphenomenon 'post-Bhangra'. This long history notwithstanding, and notwithstanding, too, some pioneering academic treatment, such as the path-breaking collection of essays *Dis-orienting Rhythms: The Politics of the New Asian Dance Music* (1996, ed. Sanjay Sharma et al; London: Zed Books) and extensive work by Dudrah himself, British Bhangra has not been subject to consistent and wide-ranging academic scrutiny. In part, this lacuna can be attributed to the ephemeral and seemingly esoteric nature of the Bhangra archive. Operating in the early days on the margins of cultural visibility, and attracting a fan base beyond the calibrations of mainstream music charts, the history of British Bhangra can be an elusive trail for a non-insider to follow. It is precisely for this reason that *Bhangra: Birmingham and Beyond* is so valuable: as the work of three declared 'insiders', who pay the music affectionate and proud homage even as they write about it, it brings together and makes accessible rare archival material and information pertaining to the genre and its wider cultural history. Alongside details about when Bhangra was first written about in the media and by whom, we find information regarding record sleeves, DJ-ing techniques, pharmacists who moonlight as events managers and medical doctors who moonlight as lyricists, and, most crucially, insight into that most talked about of Bhangra events: the 'daytimer' or day-long dance event, originally meant to sidestep the objections and anxieties of 'conservative Asian parents'.

This and other material is given to us through seven chapters, entitled 'Old Skool Bhangra', 'The Live Music Scene', 'Album Sleeves', 'The Representation of Bhangra in the British Media', 'Women in Bhangra', 'Bhangra's DJ Culture' and 'Bhangra Now'. The first and second chapters are co-written by Dudrah and Boy Chana and the sixth by Boy Chana alone; the remainder are by Dudrah. A useful introduction 'Drum "n" Dhol', again by Dudrah, precedes the whole, explaining, among other things, the terminology readers will encounter (Old Skool Bhangra, post-Bhangra, etc), and the sources for the following chapters. Each chapter explores an aspect of Bhangra's history while focusing on personalities or movements particularly important for that history. Thus, for instance, the discussion of 'Old Skool Bhangra' proceeds in step with an account of Bhangra lyricist Dr Bal Sidhu, offering fascinating glimpses into the ways in which cultural activity insinuated itself into the lives of British Asians preoccupied with economically and professionally establishing themselves in the diasporic environment. However, the chapters do leave a number of questions unasked. For example, the congas and bongos that appear in the photographs of early Bhangra ensembles raise questions about musical influences from the Caribbean long before the bhangramuffin's appearance via Apache Indian and his ilk (which is discussed in detail via the account of album sleeves in chapter 3). Discussion was also wanting on

Bhangra as a pan-Punjabi phenomenon, and whether it crosses the Indo-Pakistani divide that persists in the diaspora; and a bit more on mainstream post-Bhangra, such as the oeuvre of Nitin Sawhney, would have been welcome. But it is through unexpected juxtapositions that the most telling possibilities for analysis come through: within the discussion of women in Bhangra, for example, where the text focuses on the problems for women performers, but the closing, glorious image of a 1980s daytimer shows four young women dressed to the nines, enjoyment glowing on their faces. Although this contradiction remains unexplored in the text, it is not difficult for an attentive reader to spot and ponder over.

What remains most effective and relevant is, in fact, the presentation of this varied information, which makes it a book accessible to multiple audiences, ranging from school children to cultural historians and world music aficionados. The *mise-en-page* combines written text with graphics and images from Bhangra paratexts and paraphernalia: album covers and record sleeves, lyrics scribbled on a prescription sheet, tickets and posters for bhangra events, and photographs of equipment, tapes and CDs. Interspersed with such pages of mixed text and image are pages consisting wholly of images, typically photographs of performers and/or audiences. While offering a visual replica of Bhangra's aesthetics, which themselves bring together cut-and-mix with *desi*-style, in-your-face kitsch, the complexity and finesse with which text and image continually combine and riff off each other testify to the high production standards, as well as to the labour of love, that have evidently gone into the making of this book. This unusual but entirely appropriate approach to archiving Bhangra is conveyed boldly by the book's front cover. Three strips, patterned and coloured to resemble floorboards, reach back to the spine. The central one, which lifts up to reveal the single word 'bhangra' on the frontispiece, has the same word emblazoned across it in white and gold lettering; two stickers on the remaining strips state, respectively, in equally kitschy lettering: 'written by Dr Rajinder Dudrah', and '*Chak de Phattey*! (lift up the floorboards)'. Apart from teaching me what that catchphrase of Punjabi *joie de vivre* literally means, this cover signals all that the book tries to do, and manages successfully: to give its readers, through kitsch verging on loving self-pastiche, an enjoyable taste of Bhangra culture while effortlessly performing aspects of Bhangra's history. The critic as fan here becomes a crucial conduit for showcasing, as well as explicating, a prolific yet 'hidden' cultural form, and the ceaseless traffic between history, community and enjoyment that it embodies. 'Lift up the floorboards', indeed: this is a fitting anthem not just for the *desi* dance floor, Dr Dudrah seems to suggest, but for Bhangra's place within South Asian studies at large. Let us hope this book provokes other scholars to follow that call.

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Filming the Line of Control: The Indo-Pak Relationship through the Cinematic Lens, Meenakshi Bharat and Nirmal Kumar, eds. (2008)

New Delhi: Routledge, 256 pp.,
978-0415460941, Hardback.

Reviewed by Suvir Kaul

Lines-of-Control exist between nations, and their contours (as is the case for miles and miles between India and Pakistan, or India and Bangladesh) are often not those defined on maps. Even after borders have been agreed upon (and that is manifestly not the case on the subcontinent) they are often not demarcated on the ground. Occasionally there exist signposts or markers that remind those who dwell close to, or patrol, the borders where one country begins and another ends; but in practice the border is more permeable than any state likes – hence the need for lines-of-control, those spaces where armed pickets attempt to control access to the buffer zones between nations. At the line-of-control, only the threat of deadly force defines borders; without such compulsions, who knows where one nation would begin and another end, or where one nationality bleed into another?

This being the case, the essays collected in *Filming the Line of Control* ask how film-makers (those folks who wield 'the Cinematic Lens'!) have encouraged, or resisted, the material and ideological compulsions of nation-formation and citizenship in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The cataclysm of Partition meant that, from the 1950s, Hindi films from Bombay were full of stories of displacement and remaking, of letters misplaced and members of families lost, of the need to redefine models of community and national belonging. Few films dealt directly with the traumas of Partition, but Partition-references abounded, and it is arguable that several of the key tropes of Bombay-style melodrama emerged from this experience. In the fifty years since, as India and Pakistan fought two wars (or is it three?), Bangladesh broke away as an independent nation, and communal riots became a regular feature of public life on the subcontinent. The polarities that defined nations and religious communities within nations became the subjects of a variety of films.

Ritwik Ghatak's three films, *Megha Dhaka Tara* (1960), *Subarnarekha* (1962), and *Komal Gandhar* (1961) are the most sustained attempt by any director in India to address the legacies of Partition (Kamayani Kaushiva's essay in this volume is a good introduction to these films). Ghatak's films mourn an undivided Bengal, and in 'refugeehood' he also found a metaphor for the miseries of urban modernity. The ravages of Partition on

Muslim lives in North India found their chronicler in M. S. Sathyu, whose *Garam Hawa* (1973) remains the single most closely-observed and moving film on these themes in Hindustani. (A volume like this should surely have included an essay on this film). Since then a few other films like Shyam Benegal's *Mammo* (1994), Deepa Mehta's *Earth* (1999) and Sabiha Sumar's *Khamosh Pani* (2003), have brought a critical intelligence to bear on the human costs of Partition. Sumar's film benefits greatly from the feminist historiography that has informed recent Partition studies, with the result that it allows Savi Munjal, in a strongly-written essay, to claim that film-makers like Sumar 'assume the function of intellectuals as they confront not only extremist ideas and ideologies, which operate at the level of "common sense," but also the social forces behind them' (93). True enough, except film-makers have far more weapons in their creative armouries, and their work can move audiences – through narratives, images, soundscapes – far beyond the reach of intellectuals!

Partition, skirmishes over lines-of-control, and battles over definitions of community and nationality have energized popular film-makers in Bombay too, particularly in recent years, when Indian and Pakistani relations have been polarized, and various forms of armed militancy have become a feature of political life on the subcontinent. *Hindustan ki Kasam* (1973), which was made with the assistance of the Indian Air Force, glamourized men in uniforms, but its nationalism pales when compared to the more jingoistic, Pakistan-baiting film *Gadar* (2001). A spate of films – *Border* (1997), *Fiza* (2000), *16 December – All Forces Alert* (2002), *LOC – Kargil* (2003), *Ab Tumhare Hawale Watan Sathiyo* (2004), *Fanaa* (2006), among others – featured characters and events caught up in terrorism and warfare. Their Indian heroes defended borders against Pakistanis or enemies within, those who, for ideological or mercenary reasons, had turned against the Indian nation. Each film examined not only the state of Hindu-Muslim relations across the *sarhad*, the border, but also reflected upon the state of Hindu-Muslim relations within India, and of the status of the Indian Muslim. Perhaps 'reflected upon' is too strong a claim to make of their largely predictable, but still powerful, ways of representing Muslims and their loyalties to the nation. At their sensational best, these films also paid attention to the corruption and violence of state officials, including the police and the military, and factored that violence into the creation of armed militants within India.

Several of the essays in this volume return to these films, many of them in predictable ways, to bemoan their jingoistic vulgarity or to offer muted endorsements of films like *Veer-Zaara* (2004) or even *Main Hoon Na* (2004), which try not to think of Pakistanis as villainous enemies. Only a few of the essays add anything to our understanding of these films as *cinema*, that is as a medium whose technical resources and effects are different from those of a novel or a play. Essays feature plot summaries and thematic commentaries, and dispense with the kind of methodological precision that film theory has developed in the last few decades. Rajinder Dudhra's essay is refreshingly different, as it pays attention to audio and visual style in *Main Hoon Na* and *Veer-Zaara*, and his close readings of well-chosen passages enliven his discussion of how each film creates a sense of the border as both a physical and symbolic space. He shows how films

work, and in doing so provides a welcome reminder of the kind of film criticism that is largely absent from this volume. In a different key, Sunny Singh surveys the films mentioned above (and others) to chart a hopeful movement away from a sense of Indian-ness that is primarily defined against Pakistanis and towards a postcolonial emphasis on coming to terms with the colonial past and the post-globalization present. He recognizes, as do all the contributors to this volume, the cultural power of commercial Hindi cinema: it has 'long played' he writes 'the role of popular historian and narrator for the country, constructing images that affirm, challenge and subvert hegemonistic discourses offered by the state, the majority community, and the socioeconomic-political elite' (126). That, in a sentence, is good justification for this volume of essays.

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